AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

Letters of

EDWIN AUSTIN ABBEY, 20

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

Edwin Austin Abbey, Lieutenant

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

LETTERS OF EDWIN AUSTIN ABBEY, 2d

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
MCMXVIII

Published May 1918

"VIMY RIDGE"

Killed at Vimy Ridge
In the flower of his youth;
Killed in battle, facing foe —
Oh! May the world find Truth.

Killed at Vimy Ridge
Fighting for a "cause,"
The cause of all Humanity
And God's all-perfect laws.

R. B. H.

April 10, 1917

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

FOREWORD

The letters are printed, with little or no editing, as they were written from the engineers' shack in the Canadian woods, or from "overseas" in camp, trench, or hospital. There was, of course, no idea in the mind of the writer that they would ever be published. That they are is due to the insistent request of many who have found in them both illumination and inspiration. They tell their own story.

The summer of 1915 was spent in superintending the construction of the bridge at Shaw's Creek, which was completed at the end of September. On October 2d, the writer of the letters enlisted in the Second Canadian Pioneer Battalion, in Toronto, going overseas on December 6th, and arriving at the Flanders Front on the 11th of March, 1916. Early in the morning of April 23d, Easter Day, "Lance Corporal" E. A. Abbey was wounded, and a week later sent to England, where he remained seven months. On December 1st he was returned to France, gazetted Lieutenant, Fourth Canadian Mounted Rifles, and went at once to the front, where he was "killed in action" at Vimy Ridge, on the morning of Easter Tuesday, April 10, 1917.

W. B. A. and K. E. A.

Philadelphia, June, 1917

CONTENTS

I

PREFATORY LETTERS

(*Excerpts from letters to his Mother*)

Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

Ps. xxvi, 8

Above all countries is humanity.

PLATO

I

PREFATORY LETTERS

Sudbury, May 12, 1915

WENT to the post-office and found your letter. It was good to hear from you and your feeling about the Lusitania. The dishonor to the flag is great, but it seems to me more a dishonor to manhood and humanity. I can see very little patriotism or flags or countries; it is more a struggle of mankind to defend the principles of humanity and chivalry which the Creator has handed down, even though the defenders themselves have abused and sinned against the very principles they now defend. It is as though the world had sinned to a point where it divided, the one half going over the bounds of human possibility, the other stopping and reaching back to former good and true tradition, to resist the impulse of the lost half to swallow it up as well.

I feel we are only at the beginning, and must really fight for existence. Germany has shown herself a terrible menace, and she is beginning to feel confidence in her own resources to defy the world. The Allies have not gained an

inch of ground since the war started in August. Thousands of men have given their lives to the end that Germany is not already in a position to destroy every woman, baby, and law of God, which interferes with her affairs; and thousands more will have to offer themselves to prevent her from reaching that position in the future. No country or flag can be mine except the United States, but if I could go to this war as a citizen of the world, I would pray to be allowed.

Toronto, May 15, 1915

I can't imagine what happened to my Sunday letter. I was very careful about getting it off, because it was important. I reached Toronto Thursday morning and wrote you Thursday night and told you of my visit to the H.'s.

Yesterday afternoon Mr. I. called me up and said that Mr. H. was going to put me in charge of a bridge about to be built in the Muskoka district. I saw Mr. H. and he said that if I wanted the job I could have it. It is a position I could have desired only in my dreams. The bridge is a good size and on a curve, which requires special engineering work to lay out, and not only that, but the centre piers will have to be sunk to rock bottom, through about forty feet of mud, by means of compressed air caissons. Not only will I have

complete charge of all the engineering work, but as the contract is to be carried out on a cost plus per cent basis, I will also have to keep strict account of all labor and material and be responsible for any waste or uneconomic methods in the construction. In other words, I will be General Manager of the whole job, and this will be even harder because I have only two helpers when I could easily use five. My ability will be taxed to the utmost, which is the desire of my heart.

And yet, Mother, I went in to Mr. H. this morning and told him that I could only accept the position with the understanding that if the United States declared war and called for volunteers, I would leave at once. I am so full of that, it drowns out every ambition or desire or thought of the future that I have. I have nothing but a great big desire to give myself to help in this battle against evil.

Bala, May 19, 1915

I want to tell you what I said in that letter that never reached you. The affair of the Lusitania has gone through me again and again. I feel as if I could not just go ahead as I have since the war started, making plans for my own advancement, or my own family's welfare. It is not the isolated case of the Lusitania, or that Americans were among

those to suffer, but the realization that it has brought of the actual conditions in Europe and the German attitude. It seems to me that the only remedy is in the thousands of men who feel called to offer themselves for whatever they are worth.

Just now, it seems to me that America is in an impossible position. Honor demands that we enter the war, humanity that we stay out. I will do nothing until the United States course is definitely decided, but above everything in the world, I want to go to the war and I want you and father to tell me that I can govern myself by what knowledge and judgment I have, with the surety of your confidence in me to do right. I think I can manage to serve in some way, if only you will give me the inspiration of your approval and trust, you and father.

Toronto, May 24, 1915

I can't say how grateful I am that you can feel able to give me for whatever purpose may be intended, for now I shall definitely plan to offer my services in some capacity in the war. This bridge work here came in such an unasked, unexpected way, at a time when such opportunities are almost unthought of, that I feel that I must keep on with it at present, but if I cannot enlist here, I will plan to go directly to Europe in the fall.

Bala, May 27, 1915

Your letter came yesterday A.M. It almost answered the thought in my last; I mean the following guidance as well as one can see it, and I feel just as you do about seeing this work through if I can. Of course I have thought of Red Cross work, but there are many who are only fitted for that; and many Americans who would only think of doing that. My wish would be to go into the army and let the superior governing decide my duties. However, there is, no doubt, a guiding hand in all these matters. I believe in following, just as you; but I think there is inward guidance as well as outward.

What I meant by humanity restraining the United States is the fact that in spite of all our failure in national protest against outrages, still our very spirit has been standing as between the nations and their people that are in Germany's power. The thousands of Belgians who have nothing in the world are fed and clothed by us because Germany in the nature of our "friendly relations" cannot help but permit it. This would be cut off in case of war. Through us the Allies are able to be in some way cognizant of the condition of their prisoners of war, and Germany cannot openly resent our investigation and supervision in such matters. Our representative in the German

Court is a guarantee against open ill-treatment of the thousands of interned and non-combatant enemies in Germany. Once the United States declares war, a great silent circle will be stretched around the space enclosed by the foremost German lines, and what will happen inside that circle is all conjecture.

Bala, May 28, 1915

Your letters this week have all been full of strength and inspiration. The apathy you speak of is hard to endure, but there is nothing to do but to have patience. I would give worlds to be right in Europe now, a trained soldier, without all the delay and waiting and uncertainty ahead, but that is a universal burden. If it comes to our going in, I only hope and pray that we will take an active and aggressive share of the burden and sacrifice of the other nations, and not merely lie back and strengthen our fortifications and home protection against possible attack. I want the young manhood of America to be given a chance to prove themselves as willing to give themselves for a just cause as they were in 1861, and as they are now in the other nations of the world. Of course, we know they would, but the call seems to have come already.

Bala, June 10, 1915

Yesterday's paper had the news of Mr. Bryan's resignation, and a great deal of importance and significance, as to the attitude of the American note, attached to it. One feels the portentousness, if there is such a word, of the times. It is certainly weak and selfish to ignore the issues and to live ahead as if the distance of the actual reign of terror made it unreal. Just as surely as I hear the frogs and tree toads singing away in this quiet night in the Canadian woods, a few thousand miles away people are hearing the roar of cannon, see the glare of fires, and know themselves in the midst of death and destruction.

Bala, June 20, 1915

I suppose I might get my C.E. from this work, if I wrote up a thesis, but I have n't time now, and anyway, at present, I am not thinking much about that sort of thing. I still feel, and I 'm sure it will get stronger, rather than less, as time goes on, my desire and purpose to be one of those who make the war their business and thought. The Allies are apparently preparing for a long fight and show no sign of weakening in their determination to see the affair to a finish. There is n't much to talk about. We must just keep steady and realize the gravity of things and prepare ourselves for hard sledding.

Shaw's Creek, July 2, 1915

They are anxious for recruits in Toronto, and yet turning down hundreds who have bad eyes; it is very discouraging. I know you are praying for me. Pray that I will be accepted in some way, when the time comes.

Shaw's Creek, July 21, 1915

The busiest thing in Toronto is the recruiting which is going on. There are halls or stores in every street with banners out, recruiting for the different regiments, and a trolley car which runs all over the city, decked out with flags and bunting, with a recruiting officer inside, and signs, such as "Enlist now," "Your King and Country call you," "Remember the Lusitania," "Do your part," are everywhere. In the evening I saw two big recruiting mass meetings, with military bands and a parade of one of the city regiments, "The York Rangers." They are letting up a little in the physical requirements. The men with defective teeth are taken in and turned over to special dentists, who make them new sets free of charge; but I have heard nothing about the eyes.

Shaw's Creek, July 27, 1915

The last note to Germany is finally a satisfactory and determined statement. I may be able to serve

under my own flag yet. Certainly Germany will never accede to the requirements, and the wording is not the sort that leaves room to "renege." I hope with all my strength that the United States will come to an awakening. To the European nations we must seem, in our utter lack of preparedness in the face of the greatest warfare in history, as a modern miracle of stupid conceit. How can a nation be so utterly careless of the future? You can hardly pick up an American paper or magazine without seeing cartoons holding our futile army and navy up to ridicule. Every one knows it is true, and every one laughs and thinks it amusing.

Shaw's Creek, July 30, 1915

Father's papers came to me and I am glad to see them. Just now, the American opinion, which I cannot get in the papers up here, is especially interesting. It is so easy to forget the war in the hurry of a day's work, and yet it is still there, relentlessly raging on, and whatever we may be doing is very inconsiderable in comparison. In one of the papers father sent, I saw a paragraph saying that the American Red Cross staff in the various armies at the front were going to be withdrawn, owing to the Society's lack of funds. Is n't that a horrible example of the growing familiarity and careless contempt of war conditions on the part of the American

public! It really should be the first and last waking thought of every one, ahead of all personal worries or affairs. If it were, what a difference in events there would be.

Shaw's Creek, August 2, 1915

Here we are at the beginning of another month, and the anniversary of the beginning of the war. How many things have happened since last August that we thought impossible then; and how much nearer are the Allies to an advantage or to any certainty of ultimate success? Something makes us confident, or rather the general feeling of the outside world is a comforting confidence in final victory, and still the Germans are advancing on foreign soil, after a year's resistance. Why is the world so unwilling to look serious things in the face?

I wonder what we are going to do, having sent our note, which could not have been received with plainer evidence of dissatisfaction by the Germans. I am beginning to feel, as you do, that the flag is disgraced; the honor of the nation being fumbled away. The time for neutrality has passed. Why is the United States so slow? I can think of nothing but the war. It seems immoral to think or plan for anything else.

Shaw's Creek, August 12, 1915

Your letter came yesterday, and it was a comfort and help to know that you feel as strongly as I do about the war and are making it easier for me in my plans. I still hope the United States will have an awakening, but if affairs are not definite by fall, I still want to do something, whatever it can be; and the first thing logically seems now to try to enlist in Canada, if there is any branch of the service that will have me. My eyes will undoubtedly be a stumbling-block; but there must be some way. I can't think that I would be useless.

Shaw's Creek, August 25, 1915

Your Wednesday letter came this morning. I have been slow with my letters this week. Of course we will see each other again. I never had any plan that did not include that. If by chance I can enlist with the Canadians, it would mean at least six months' training in Canada, and certainly in that time there would be many chances. But, mother dear, I think it is nearly impossible for me to get in with them. The eye examination is still one which only a piece of luck would allow me to pass, and I am an American, which is in my disfavor, even if I am willing to take the oath of allegiance. I think the Hospital Corps will be my best chance, and if I am not able to get into the regular army

service, there are some independent organizations. The best chances are, I think, in Canada, so I will try here first, but it may be that I will have to try America, or my original plan of going to England. Things must work out, as they always do.

I know that in those moments when the thought of my possible going away comes, and for a moment seems overwhelming, it would help to think of the women and children, still unhardened to blind terrors, who have been stricken, —I do not mean killed, but have had all that was humanly dear and comforting snatched horribly away, — and the victory that must be gained to put an end to all this horror. Remember that your strength is the mother strength that sacrifices itself for the children and the weak. I am your child, but no longer a human child with the necessities of human children; and yet, mother, in the greatest way, the spiritual way, I need you more every day, and in that need you are always giving and helping me and are always with me.

Shaw's Creek, September 15, 1915

Your letter came yesterday morning, and the newspapers, too. I am glad to read the "North American" editorials and articles. I wish that I could feel that it represented the majority sentiment in the United States. One feels more keenly every

day the demand for action, individual as well as national. It seems almost incredible that people can remain inactive. These last two weeks are becoming more irksome every day. I want to get started. If I cannot be placed in Toronto in the short time it will take to find out, two or three days, I will lose no time getting home, and will start as I originally thought I would have to, going over to England. I am so glad you have begun making the surgical dressings as a definite work. It will give you the relief that doing something with your hands means, and according to reports, they are terribly needed.

Shaw's Creek, September 24, 1915

I feel this way about the American situation. All summer, as one by one the various crises arose and were smothered, I hoped that some definite lead would come; something that an American could stand by and say, "This is my country's decision, I must abide by it." But after all these months the country has made evident only one determination, that of avoiding the issue as long as possible. Well, I think there is no question but that the issue can be avoided until affairs are settled in Europe. The Powers that are looking for an outlet on this continent cannot give it attention now, although the intention seems clear enough. Amer-

ica will not escape. We are very much involved, but I do not think the danger is imminent. How can people be so oblivious? How can a half century have made a nation who sacrificed her boys for the purest principle ever fought for, so desirous of nothing but safety and comfort?

Bala, September 30, 1915

The work here is finished. There was some talk of putting in two additional piers, but it has been decided against, I am glad to say, for I think it would have spoiled the proportions. I am going in to Toronto, where I have a few construction plans to finish up, then up here for a final inspection Monday or Tuesday, and then, I hope, home.

Toronto, October 2, 1915

I have wonderful news. I have been accepted, the thing we have wanted and prayed for so long; and in the Engineers, where the work will be constructive, as you wanted so much. I will tell you just how it happened. I made up my mind I would go to the armories this afternoon and do my best to get in. I went in and asked where to go to join, and was directed to a room upstairs which was full of people, principally sergeant majors, by the amount of chevrons. I went up to one and said that I wanted to enlist, and he asked me what regi-

ment. I said I did n't know, and asked him if there were any engineers recruiting. He said "yes," and directed me down about a half a dozen corridors.

In the last corridor a soldier was standing, writing something on the wall. I asked him if he could tell me which room was the engineers' office, — there are no signs, — and he said, "Which engineers do you wish to join, the Pioneers?" Then I saw that he was an officer, captain or lieutenant, I do not know which. I must have looked blank, not knowing what varieties of engineers there were. So he took me into a room and began to tell me about the Pioneers. It is a regiment formed to do all kinds of construction work, railroads, highways, trenches, sanitary sewer work in camps, etc., just exactly the thing we thought of. He said there was going to be lots of hard work swinging a pick, probably, and the likes of that, and the men are a rough crowd, tradesmen of all sorts, carpenters, masons, plumbers, pipe-layers.

Well, as he talked, I almost grew sick, because it was so exactly the thing I longed for, and I was sure I could n't pass the eye test. So I said, "That just suits me, if I can only pass the physical examination." He said, "There won't be much trouble about that by the look of you." I had left my spectacles at home. He saw that I was a uni-

versity man, and said that I had a good chance to become a non-commissioned officer. Then he took me to the recruiting-room and I was given my application papers and went up to the doctor. You can imagine that I was nervous by that time.

I stripped and went to the doctor after they had measured me up. The first thing he did was to ask me to read letters on a card across the room, and of course the letters on the last line were just too small for me to read; they jumped and danced, and strain as I would I just could n't see them. I told him I was nervous, so he gave me plenty of time and switched me over to a card by the window instead of the electric light. Finally, I blurted out a guess. I was not sure whether I was anywhere near right. Anyway, he thought it over and said he thought he would give me a chance; the rest of my physical condition was good, and he wrote down my physical development and fitness as good; and of course my teeth are all right. So he gave me a passed certificate. I could hardly believe it.

After that, we went from one room to another where there were a number of recruits for other regiments, signing papers, and finally were sworn in. So now I am actually a soldier. I was at the armories over two hours, and have just come back to write this. When it is written and mailed I

will wire. Does n't it seem like Providence again, mother, after all the waiting and the work at Shaw's Creek just nicely finished up? Much love, dearest mother, to you and father, and thank you both for making me feel that I can do this with your blessing.

II

LETTERS FROM THE FLANDERS FRONT

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.

II

LETTERS FROM THE FLANDERS FRONT

France, March 8, 1916

DEAR FATHER:

We arrived here early this morning, but did not disembark until daylight. The trip across was very smooth. I slept most of the time, but as far as I can see no one at all was sick. Rather a pleasant surprise, for every one expected it to be rough. I can't tell you the name of the place, though I do not suppose you will have much trouble guessing. We are in camp about five miles outside the city. Twelve men to a tent about half the size of the old National Guard tents at Sea Girt.

We are only here temporarily, but where we go or when, I do not know and could n't tell you if I did. It is rather hard to write under this censor system; I suppose I will get used to it. I am on the city piquet to-night, so I am looking forward to seeing the city under more comfortable circumstances than I did this A.M., during the march, when the weight of the pack on back and shoul-

ders was enough to crack a man's spine; though this morning, even, I was so interested most of the time that I forgot I was being tortured. It is still fairly cold, but the snow is melting. I hope it will soon be warm so that we can discard overcoats and have one less thing to carry.

This is really just a note to let you know that I am safe in France. I will write a decent letter as soon as I get turned round. Much love to mother.

Your son,

EDWIN

March 11, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

We are at the front much sooner than we expected. I wrote father from France on the 8th, but I do not know whether he will get it, for I did not put any stamp on it. They tell me now that to go through it is best to put "via Canada" on the envelope, or else put on some English stamps, and I have not any. Be sure and tell me whether these letters without stamps get through all right, and when you write, enclose an envelope and paper for an answer, because it may be hard to get paper. One thing I need is a good strong jackknife with one blade and a can-opener blade. I have lost mine and cannot get hold of one here.

Our billet is right on one of the main communication roads running back of the line, and it is interesting to watch the traffic that goes by. There is a constant stream of transports, dispatch riders, and parties of infantry going in and out of the trenches. The transports are of every possible description, starting with big motor trucks and coming down to little carts. To-day I even saw one of the London motor busses with the winding staircase in the back. It is certainly an interesting place to be, and Belgium, or this part of it, is like the pictures in the Sunday papers. It is rather hard to write an interesting letter under the censoring conditions, because one is constantly thinking of interesting things to say and then cannot say them. It is late now, so I must stop, but I will write often, and, as I get more settled, will do better.

March 14, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I have not got quite settled for letter writing. I do hope these will reach you all right. As soon as I can get some English stamps I will put them on my letters and make assurance doubly sure. I wrote you Saturday evening just before we went up to the trenches for the first time. . . .

I am short of time, for lights go out here at

eight o'clock, but I will get off a good letter before the end of the week. Everything is fine and we were lucky to get here so quickly. Much love to you both.

March 19, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I have finally gotten a green envelope, which will let my letters be censored at the base, so I can write without feeling that my own officers are reading the letter, which is uncomfortable.

I am going to start with our leaving Hazeley Down, and try to give you a consecutive narrative up to the present. We started out about 7 A.M. on Tuesday, the 7th, as you know, and marched to our port of embarkation in England. We carried all our worldly possessions on our backs, which is an uncomfortable operation. It was a very cold morning when we started, and a slight snow had turned into ice on the road, making walking very difficult. At noon we halted for lunch, and it started to snow, thick, heavy, wet flakes which had us soaked through in half an hour and lasted all the afternoon. We arrived in the steamboat sheds at —— about 3 P.M., pretty well done up with the hard marching and heavy load and the wet. There was a refreshment stand in the shed, where they sold hot coffee and buns, and it was the storm

centre of a riot in about five minutes. I managed to get two mugs of coffee and half a dozen buns, so was very comfortable.

We stayed around the shed until about 6 and then went aboard the steamer and sailed about 6.30. The steamer was a low gray boat, somewhat the shape of the Sandy Hook boats, only smaller, and it travelled like an express train. I was never on a boat that cut through the water at such speed. It was dark, of course, when we started, and cold. I stayed on deck an hour or so, and got some supper of "bully-beef" (canned beef pressed), biscuit, and tea. We were distributed about the ship in various cabins, etc., so that there was room to lie down, but no floor space to spare if you did.

It was cold enough to wake one up after sleeping an hour or so, even wearing an overcoat and all. I slept for an hour or two, and, when I woke up stiff and cold, wandered about the boat until I got warmed up, and then went to sleep again. After one of these sleeps, about 1 A.M., I guess, I woke up and went on deck and found that we were tied up to a dock. I always imagined that a Channel passage was very rough, but certainly it was n't by our course, for I never even felt a motion. The dock and harbor were brightly lighted and searchlights were flashing around. I noticed then that the deck was seven or eight feet above

the dock, but when we landed at seven o'clock, the deck was away below the dock, about ten feet, I should think, a tremendous tide.

I went to sleep again, and, after several more hours of discomfort, managed to get some hot tea from the second-class pantry, which put a fresh face on affairs. Shortly after that, we got our own breakfast of tea, cheese, and biscuits, the latter to last us for lunch with a tin of bully-beef. As the dawn broke, I watched the city grow into form, just as I had Plymouth about five months earlier, and it was just as satisfying to see this new country take the expected shape. The buildings were tall and thin, white with green shutters and little balconies. One could make out the signs on the shops and see people walking along the streets; and soon the street cars began to run.

At seven o'clock we disembarked and marched through the city, at first the docks and railway yards. In some of the latter there were German prisoners working, unloading cars under French guards. The latter were quite picturesque with long black beards, light blue frock coats, and guns with bayonets about a yard long. The Germans looked rather indifferent, or at any rate non-committal. They wore the little round caps you see in pictures. The central part of the city was very pretty, and it was interesting to see the people,

though the few men seemed to be soldiers as in England. I say few, because it was a large city.

There were thousands of small boys who ran along and held our hands and begged insistently and continually for "Bees-keet," occasionally varying with "cigarette," evidently aware that the British soldier usually carries a ration of biscuits with him and is inclined to give them away, rather than sacrifice his teeth in the effort to nibble a corner off for nourishment. Some seemed dressed very prettily, and it was surprising to see them running loose; then they graded off to the typical urchin, but not miserable at all, happy and laughing. The invariable costume was a smock sort of apron tied behind; their legs were bare, and some wore sabots and Tam-o'-Shanter caps.

When we got through the city, we climbed up a long high bluff at the rear of the town and made our way to the camp; about a five-mile journey altogether, with a hard hill. It grew warm and our overcoats got unbearable before we arrived, so we took them off and carried them, *en bandoulière*, which increased our load to the elastic limit of the spine, I think. We arrived at the camp about eleven and got a good wash and stayed there until night. At 8.30 we started back to the city, and about midnight were loaded into a train at the freight station. There were thirty-three of us in

a box car about half the size of an American box car, so that when we found room for our equipment, there was n't room to lie on the floor, even like sardines, to sleep. I was in the car with the bugle band, and that meant about six kettle-drums and a bass-drum to accommodate.

The train travelled through France all day Thursday. The country was interesting to watch. There were lots of French soldiers, and we went by many camps, but no city that I knew, no large city at all. We had cheese and biscuits and bully-beef to eat, and at two stations hot tea was passed in. We reached our destination about midnight, Thursday, and as soon as we got off the train we could hear the big guns and have heard them ever since; but now one is so accustomed to them that it blends in with ordinary noises, like the surf at the seashore. We had a march of about four miles to a hut camp, not Hazeley Down huts, by a long shot, but real huts, half buried in the ground, protection from shell fire. We piled into these so tired we could hardly move, and slept until well into the next morning. There was not much water visible, so I washed in the snow and we got some more biscuit, bully-beef, and tea.

At two o'clock, " B " Company fell in and we moved again, this time only a couple of miles up the road to a billet in the barn of a farmhouse.

There was plenty of straw and we were fixed up comfortably. Saturday morning we spent fixing up the billets, and at five o'clock we started out to the trenches. We went right out to the front line, — Canadian front, of course, — and helped a company of engineers building a support trench about thirty or forty yards back of the front trenches. This was March 11th, so I was in the front line trenches just five months and nine days after I enlisted. That is not a very long wait.

We are to receive our training right here, working for a month with the engineers and then taking over their work. Sunday night we went in again on the same work. Monday, I was sent back to our base camp of huts to attend a school of trench construction, with part of the company, and we have been working all this week building trenches and fortifications for the third line way back from the line of fire, under the instruction of experienced engineers. I expect that most of my platoon will be here next week, too, and I may stay on, but after that we will be back at the real work, strengthening and repairing the front line.

The weather for the last week has been beautiful, warm, and sunny, and the snow has long since disappeared. I am in fine health and looking forward to an interesting spring. The chief thing I need is letter paper (it is hard to get), and

tooth-cleaning accessories every six weeks or so. I wrote to father on the 8th and to you on the 11th, 16th, and to-day. I hope they will arrive safely. I will try to write regularly, and you must know how eagerly I look for mail. Papers of any sort are very welcome. They are hard to get hold of.

March 21, 1916

Dear Father:

As I guess you know from my letters by now, I have reached the scene of action and am taking my humble part in the operations. Since I have been here, I have had three letters from you and five from mother, all forwarded, of course, from Hazeley Down. The mail service here is marvellous — incoming and outgoing every day; and I do not think so far as my receiving is concerned, that there will be any additional delay. To-day is the twelfth of my sojourn in this country and the tenth since my first visit to the trenches. We arrived in the small hours of a Friday morning after a twenty-four-hour run, cramped up in one of those little French box cars, and after marching three or four miles were glad to turn into a temporary camp of huts, throw off our packs, which had gained several pounds weight with every step, and get to sleep. The whole battalion was so dead tired that even

the fact that we could hear the guns from the moment we tumbled out of the train, failed to stimulate us.

I woke up about 8 A.M. and turned out of the hut to see how the land lay. The camp was at the side of one of the big main roads that divide this country up almost like a big city, they are so regular, although it is nothing but farm land. They are lined with very regular, tall elms with the branches trimmed about thirty feet above the ground and that stand out very prominently, because there are few trees, practically none, elsewhere; and are paved continuously with Belgian blocks, which are all right for transports, but make marching a nightmare. We were on a rise and the country stretched out almost flat in every direction, dotted with farmhouses with thatched or red-tiled roofs and windmills. In the distance, one could make out the spires and other indications of a fairly large city.

I followed some other men into a little cottage at the side of the road, and got a cup of black coffee and some coarse bread and butter for tuppence. There was still a lot of snow on the ground, and as search failed to produce a pump or well, I washed the railway dirt off as well as I could with that. About eleven, our cooks managed to make a little tea and we were served with hard-

tack, bully-beef, and cheese. At 2 P.M. B Company lined up again with kits packed and resumed the march, leaving the rest of the battalion to its fate. B Company was the first to get away and the first in the trenches. We marched up the road a few miles and were put into a billet, the barn of a big farmhouse, with lots of straw on the floor and in the loft. We were told that there would be no more duty that day, and it did n't take me very long to get into the straw again and roll off about ten more hours of sleep.

Saturday we spent the morning cleaning up the billet, and at 4.30 in the afternoon we fell in with guns, ammunition, and spades and started for the trenches. On the way we picked up a party of engineers who took us in charge. It was good and dark when we came up to the line, and the Germans had started their nightly illumination with star shells, something like rockets, only they burst into one luminous ball, instead of stars, which is so brilliant that it lights up the surrounding ground with a glare like a searchlight, and floats down slowly, burning brightly for several seconds after it reaches the ground. We send them up, too, but ours are not nearly so bright and often fizzle. These stars go up continuously, all along the line as far as you can see, so you can imagine the effect as one approaches. You feel as though you were pull-

ing into Manhattan Beach or Atlantic City on the Fourth.

It was n't long before we were in the communication trench that leads out to the front line. You have seen hundreds of pictures of the trenches and read the descriptions, but it certainly was thrilling to be actually in. The trenches in this part of the line have been pretty well perfected. It is well over the height of a man from the bottom to the top of the parapets, so that there is no stooping to be done, and the bottom is floored with "trench-mats," a sort of latticed board walk lifted up off the ground on stakes, so that the water or mud underneath does not matter. The bottoms, of course, are sloped toward any available low point for drainage. The sides of the trench are revetted with screens of chicken wire over canvas, which is quickly put up and fairly permanent in good weather, and the top two or three feet is built of sand bags to prevent crumbling on the edge.

My candle has only half a second left, so I will have to stop and finish to-morrow.

March 22

The trenches twist and turn so, a precaution against enfilade fire in the event of the enemy's occupying any position, that we seemed to walk miles before we reached our destination. It was a

new support trench about forty yards back of the front line. Saturday night I was on a "carrying party," whose duty was to carry timber, wire, etc., from a material pile to the working party. Sunday night we went in again and I was in a digging-gang. Some of the new work had fallen in and we had to remove the sand bags and dig down in front of the screens and push the latter out, wire them back, fill up behind them, and put back the bags. It sounds simple enough, but the digging was the worst I ever struck. Sticky mud that clings to your shovel, so that you can only get rid of one shovel full out of every three, and that by effort. After two or three hours of it, I am all in and ready to admit it. We usually work from sundown till about midnight, although whatever task is given has to be finished.

Monday morning I was sent back to our first camp, which has been made battalion headquarters, and sent to a school of trench construction with a detail from the company. We spent the week building different sorts of trenches and dug-outs under the instruction of N.C.O.'s from the engineers and infantry battalions, who have been doing the work for the last year. This week my platoon is at the school, so the few of us who went last week are staying on at the camp, doing guard and fatigues. I am on guard now. Next Monday we

will go back to our billets and work and let another platoon take the instruction course.

One of the chief interests here on clear days is to watch the aeroplanes. Sometimes the sky is full of them and a good proportion are German. Our aircraft guns shell them, and one can watch the shells burst around them. They get pretty close, but I never saw one hit. When they get overhead, the shells, or bits of them, drop around you, which is uncomfortable.

The weather was fine last week, warm and sunny every day; but it is raining again. I will be glad to get any newspapers you can send. The only news here consists of rumors that travel up and down the line and grow like the black crows in the Second Reader. Whenever you write, enclose envelope and paper for an answer. It is hard to get anything in that line here.

You know by this time that the draft came through all right. I have not touched any of it yet, and do not think I will for the present. We are getting a franc a day, which is sufficient to eke out rations with fried eggs and coffee at the cookshops along the road.

I am glad the badges reached you all right. They were designed by one of the officers. Our musketry was rather rough and ready. None of the fine points you speak of. We are always

supposed to carry guns, but I do not think we will have much opportunity to use them. Our main aim is to get our work done, attracting the least attention possible.

March 25, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I have had five letters from you since I have been here, dated February 22d and 29th, March 1st, 1st, and 3d, the last four together. You can imagine what it was for me to have them in this strange place and experience, for certainly it is that. The letter you wrote speaking of the Sacrament was the one I liked the best, I mean was especially a help, for I had been wondering how I could ever manage it here. Of course, there are occasional Roman churches, but that is all, and of course, now we are on active service, always on duty, bounds are short and strict, and one's time is seldom one's own; but you have taken all that anxiety from me. Were I in one of the English regiments, I know that opportunity would be made, for I suppose one of the most notable things in all this war has been the earnest, brave, and never ceasing work of the English chaplains.

My two weeks back of the line end to-day. It is four o'clock now, and at six we start for the trenches. This time we are to stay right in them,

working day and night for about three days, as the infantry does. It has been a good rest. The hard journey here and quick and uninterrupted heavy work at the end was a test of endurance. Now that I have been back and doing work with no rush or strain attached to it I am refreshed in every way and looking forward to a real start.

You remember I sent a bundle to Aunt Gertrude, extra socks, etc. Well, I had bad luck. I allowed four pairs, which really was lots; but one pair failed to come back from the wash just before I left, and the second day here I was drying two pairs in front of a fire, and managed to burn holes in the bottoms of one pair, and one of the other pair disappeared while hanging on the line, which brought me down to one pair. There was a lot of walking to be done in water and mud, so that was n't enough. I wrote to H. and Aunt G. both, and the day before yesterday I had a wonderful package from H., with three fine pairs of socks, and things to eat; and yesterday, another splendid package from Aunt G., with cake, chocolate, and the socks, three pairs; so now I have seven pairs, all splendid, and my feet are cared for, for a long time to come. Miss McM. and Mr. B. just wrote that some are on the way from each, so I will hardly be able to carry them all.

People seem to be sending me too many things,

but I will tell you the special things I want: tooth-paste and brush as often as you think they are needed, and sometimes a towel or a comb. These things are hard to buy, and keeping clean is the one nearly impossible thing. I will tell you of things when I need them. There are no shops here, save those that sell eatables of different sorts.

We had lovely weather last week, but this has been stormy and cold. Last night and the night before very cold, and yesterday driving snow, which turned the world white again. However, to-day the temperature rose tremendously, and now the afternoon sun is shining brightly on ground bare of snow and drying rapidly.

There was one letter that I received here among the first, I forgot to tell you: a colored picture of a soldier, with "from Billy" printed on the back. To think that that dear little fellow should have been one of the first to greet me here at the front!

All last week I did sentry duty on the big road. It seemed strange to be there under the stars, in sound of the nightly guns, and challenging the Allies' soldiers as they passed.

The time is getting on, and I must go and get my cheese and bread and tea for supper. Dearest mother, your letters are such a joy. I will try to write often, and, as time goes on, share the expe-

riences with you and father. I am in fine health and spirits, and facing the work ahead with a good heart. Good-bye for a little time, dearest mother.

March 30, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter of March 10th, and one from Phillips, each enclosing a picture, came on Tuesday. I liked the one you enclosed the best. They are both beautiful, and yet I think that he could have done better. There is an inside glint of warmth and sweetness that the little man on Ninth Street caught and Phillips seemed to miss. Still, I love them and will always keep them with me.

I wrote you on Saturday, and Saturday night we went into the trenches for two days, acting as infantry, coming out again on Monday night. Part of our training, I suppose, to teach us the actual use of the trenches. It was long enough to make me think that the infantry deserves most of the credit of the war. They usually go in for three days at a time, and then are out for three days, though sometimes the shifts are longer. While they are in, they are practically on duty all the time, and much of their duty exposes them to rifle and shell fire; then there is the prospect of a shelling at almost any time. The trenches we were in

were dry, but they must have been terrible last winter, for they say the water was often over the tops of their high boots. I suppose the German trenches, where we were, were about a hundred yards away, but they looked very near.

Now we are billeted at another farm and go out on working parties every night, as before. It has been quite cold, but to-day was sunny and warmer, and I think good weather is coming. This morning we were marched to a neighboring town and given a warm bath and clean underclothes. The first bath I have had since I left Hazeley Down, and I certainly was glad to get it. I put on the extra underwear and shirt that I brought with me. The clothes that are given out are washed, but not very thoroughly, and are often infested, so it is just as well not to take them. If you have not given away my underclothes, it would be a comfort, if you would send me a suit now and then, one every month, for I do not think that we will get a bath oftener than that. If you have given them away, don't buy good ones, but get the cheapest you can, for I just throw away the ones I take off. There is no place to get them washed, and no water to do my own washing, for it is very hot here in the summer, and water of any kind is scarce.

There does not seem to be much news. I have only had your letter and father's since my last.

Everything is going well with me and I am quite happy. The Government has stopped the issue of the green uncensored envelopes for a month, which means that I will have to save up the intimate things that one does n't wish other people to read.

France, April 1, 1916

Dearest Mother :

This is just a little note to greet you on the first of the month. It has been a beautiful, glorious day, with the bright sun and clear blue sky and the fresh spring feeling in the air. Your letter with enclosure of Dean S. came just a little while ago, and I am going to send it back to you in this. It is a wonderful letter. I am glad to have the pictures and like them. It seemed to me that they made me look as old as I should, but much more than I do. I am going to write to father this afternoon, but if I take this right in, I can catch a mail that leaves to-night which I can't with his. I will write you a real letter to-morrow or the next day. Much love.

France, April 1, 1916

Dear Father :

Your letter of March 10th came last Tuesday. And to-day, one from mother, dated March 17th. I wrote a little note to her to-day. Quite a lot of

things have happened since my last letter, but the chief thing is that we went into the front line as infantry for two days and so feel that we are really initiated. We took the regular turns of sentry duty, and the whole experience was worth having, although not at all pleasant. The German lines, at the point we occupied, were about one hundred yards from ours and very much in view, — the parapet of their trench, that is, not the men. Trench warfare has for its chief principle keeping out of sight, and both sides are pretty expert at it. Snipers have both sides pretty well covered, and it is not safe to keep your head up very long, when on watch. Fifteen or twenty seconds is lots.

At night, both sides send out patrols and working parties under cover of the darkness, but the star shells make them stick pretty close to cover. The land for about half a mile back of the trenches is a desolate area. The few trees or buildings left are shattered to within a few feet of the ground with shell fire, and the ground is pitted with craters and shell holes. I must admit that when our time came to go out, I was more than ready to obey the order. Even without the exchange of compliments which is growing more continuous and frequent with the spring the place is calculated to dampen the spirits of a confirmed optimist.

Since Wednesday we have been billeted at

another farm, going into the trenches at night on working parties. The longer one is here, the clearer things get, and of course it is much easier to work and more interesting if one can get an idea of what the authorities are driving at. We have not been long enough yet to understand much, but there seems to be more of a plan than appeared at first. It would be a great help if I could get hold of a map of the district, but that, of course, is impossible. I have asked Aunt Gertrude to send me a small war map if she can ; the sort you get at news stands. I do not know why I did not think of bringing one. I wish I could tell you the places we go to, so that you would have the interest of following me around on a map.

There are few stores here. One can get things like oranges, chocolate, etc., but that is about the limit. Sometimes we get into small towns, but even there, the stock in the stores is very meagre. Nothing much that one wants to buy, excepting eatables. The people in this part of the country are all peasants, apparently, even in the towns. It is astonishing the way they stick to their homes in the firing zone, women and children going around unconcernedly and men working in the fields. Often shells burst in the field they are ploughing.

The weather this week has been beautiful, warm and sunny. I hope spring has come to stay. I am

anxious to see what they are doing in Mexico, and the Presidential news, for I haven't seen a newspaper for nearly a week. Be sure to send me a paper occasionally. I think the United States gets the best news, any way. Your letters are always welcome. It is very cheering to have the mail man pass things out.

Flanders, April 3, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I did not half answer your letter of March 17th in my little note on the 1st. You don't know how much a letter means out here. It seems to put a new face on everything. Yours came Saturday, and one, from father, written on the same day, came to me to-day. He said that you had just received a Toronto paper telling of our departure from England. By this time you may possibly have my letter written from here on the 11th, although I know the Western mails are very slow. The pictures weren't much of a success, I am afraid. I do not think that I have changed so much as it would seem. However, perhaps there will be an opportunity for better ones later on. Yours were a little disappointing at first, but I like them more and see more in them every time I look, which I suppose is the proof of Phillips's real worth. He has gone below. Instead of the picture I had before,

now I can really see you. I am glad that you are feeling and keeping well.

You asked me to tell you what time we got up, and that is rather hard. When we are at the base, as we are now, reveille is usually 5.30 and breakfast at 7; but when we are working in the trenches at night, and do not finish until after midnight, we are allowed to sleep until 8.30 or 9 o'clock. If we are working at a distance from our billet, there is generally a hard march after the work is done, which uses one up. Now the whole battalion is in a big camp at a different part of the line from that in which we were. We moved in yesterday, and I do not know how long we are to stay or what our next work will be.

The last two days have been quite hot, as though April really intended to be spring. The mud has dried up in many of the wet places, so that uncomfortable part is nearly over. I do not think that I will need any socks. H. has sent me five pairs, Aunt G. the three I left with her, and Mrs. B., in Guelph, two pairs; and with the one good pair I had, eleven should last for a long time. It is really a great deal to carry around. Probably I will have more from Canada before these are done. If I should ever be stuck, I would write to H. and get more very quickly, for she can get them where she is. If you will send me

the cheap, thin underclothes once a month, and occasionally toilet things, I will tell you what I need, or want, rather, from time to time. What I want most now is a case to hold my toilet things in, for I have lost mine.

Do you remember the army store where father used to get me khaki trousers and shirts. I wonder if you could n't get a shirt there occasionally and send with the other things. Remember, nothing good; but it will give me a clean change occasionally without depending on these Government things. I expect hot weather is ahead. Another thing that would add to my comfort, if father could pick up a pair of riding or infantry breeches. They are the most comfortable things to wear with puttees. This, however, is going to extremes. Really, I have everything I need, and I am not strong on adding to my wardrobe, for it is impossible to keep anything in decent shape; and the tendency is to throw away everything that is not absolutely necessary, so you won't have to carry it around. The H.'s' bundle came, and the best thing in it were your handkerchiefs, for that is what I badly needed. The good white handkerchiefs that you sent, I left in my bundle with Aunt G. The things you send will always be what I want most, and I will always tell you what I need. So far as eating and general comforts go,

you can rest easy that I am all right; conditions have been greatly improved since the beginning of the war. Keeping clean is really the one difficulty and that can be overcome. Now I must stop for a while.

France, April 9, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your package came the day before yesterday, and it was like a breath from home, especially the little towels. They are incongruous with the surroundings, but it is the sort of incongruity that cheers one up with the realization that all these hard conditions are only temporary and the other is the goal we are working our way to. You seem to have thought of everything; the shoestrings and menders and pins are almost invaluable. And the former makes me think of something else, insoles, unknown here. At least, one can never find any stores that have them. They are wonderfully helpful in heavy boots. My size is $7\frac{1}{2}$.

Then the toothbrush; I have n't felt so revived for weeks as when I started off with it yesterday morning. You know the prophylactic and its imitations have apparently found no place in the English markets — perhaps, owing to the supposed indifference of the English public in general to dental matters. I did my best to get one in

Winchester, which has two splendid drug-stores, but the very best was the old flat kind; so it has been a long time since I have had the comfort of feeling satisfactorily clean. The cold cream and cucumber jelly are going to be fine, too. I remember Mrs. H. telling about O.'s disgust when some one sent him a cake of soap; but I will have to admit that keeping halfway clean is my one comfort, and it is a hard job. You seem to have sent me just the right things. Perhaps a little later I will have to ask for insect powder.

The chocolate and peppermint were enjoyed to the last mouthful. I can remember at home I would n't walk across the room for candy; but anything good to eat here is a luxury. Rations are good though, and sufficient, but not any more than that, and one usually has a pretty healthy appetite most of the time. We get bacon for breakfast and stew for dinner, as a rule; and tea twice a day. That tea is as precious as gold, and it is good, too. Good tea, condensed milk, and sugar. Drinking water is scarce, and one does n't like to use much under any conditions. Then we get jam and cheese and butter and bread and, occasionally, canned beef and hard-tack. Every once in a while, your stomach turns against one or the other of the commodities — stew, usually; but if you forego it for a day or two, the taste comes back again.

There is usually one or several cottages in the neighborhood of a camp, where one can get fried eggs and coffee and oranges and chocolate, etc.; but to tell you the truth, my stomach turns against the eggs and coffee as often as against the army rations. There is something unappetizing in the way of cooking; and the places are not always as spotless as they might be. The coffee would be unrecognizable in America, equally at home or in Dennet's: strong, bitter, and peculiar.

The parcel was dated March 24th, so it only took a scant two weeks to get here; but the last letter I had was, I think, the 17th, so there must be some others on the way. Still, it would be wonderful if they were not held up sometimes. I have been very fortunate, for every parcel sent me has come through on time, and lots of the boys' are either very late or lost, and this is the first week I can remember that I have had no letter or packet of letters from you. Aunt G. sent me another package yesterday, with apples and chocolate and rusk, so I have been wonderfully lucky in that way, with food two days' running. Of course, things are always to be passed around when they come.

We are in tents now, and they are very comfortable. The weather is gradually getting warmer and brighter. The chaplain had an open-air serv-

ice to-day, and I could see them being held in some other camps near, one of which rejoiced in a band. O.'s battalion is camped only a few fields away, but he is not back yet, for I asked one of the men.

We are doing some very interesting work now, building an entirely new trench to replace one destroyed in a bombardment. Yesterday morning we did not get back until four o'clock, and this morning it was 5.30. Broad daylight when we reached camp. Of course, that was because we had quite a long march from the place where we are working. Every day, as one sees into the work a little more, it becomes more interesting and easier to do. I hope I will be able to get the enthusiasm and determination that the H. boys have.

I wish I could give you an idea of this camp, as I sit here writing, outside the tent. It is so typically a part of the war. The tents are in rows and streets, of course, but pretty well spread apart in these days of aeroplanes and long-distance shelling. Then standing about are the transports and water wagons. The wagons are just bringing in the day's supplies with a lot of bustle and urging of mules, and the field kitchens are sending up a cloud of smoke, for it is nearly tea-time. Soldiers are in every direction and military impedimenta in piles and around the tents. In the distance the flat land-

scape spreads out with other camps and farmhouses and windmills. Overhead is the hum of an aeroplane: sometimes so high up it is only a speck, and sometimes quite close down. You can usually tell the enemy's planes when they are over our lines, because they are surrounded by puffs of smoke which follow them just ahead, or just behind, — the shells of our aircraft guns bursting. The big guns sometimes boom steadily for hours, but just now they are quiet.

Some mail has come in on one of the wagons. Perhaps your letters are in it, but they will not be distributed until to-morrow, and I want to mail this now. Mail is the brightest, happiest, most longed-for, expected, and appreciated thing in all this country. You can't know how much pleasure the parcel gave me; it was so full of your thought of me. Good-bye now for a while, and much love.

April 12, 1916

Dear Father:

Yesterday I had a family mail. Two letters from you, March 20th and 24th, one from mother, March 24th, and one from Sue, March 23d. It is funny that mother's parcel mailed at the same time reached me on Friday, five days ago. It only shows that one cannot depend too much. The shoe-laces and menders were fine, and very valuable addi-

tions to my kit. I re-sewed all the buttons on my tunic with one of the latter, yesterday. It was the new tunic I received just before leaving Hazeley, and the buttons were tacked on with sugar-bag string. Three of them were off and the other eight were hanging by a thread. I have also learned to darn socks. There is plenty to occupy one's time; but lately we have had very little time.

Last Friday we started to work on a section of trenches that have been pretty well ruined in recent bombardments, and have been out every night, seldom getting back before five or six in the morning. It is a bad piece of work, and I will be glad to see the end of it. We are under canvas now and very comfortable until to-day. There has been a high wind and driving rain since early morning, and we have had our hands full trying to keep the tent together, and fairly dry inside. However, it is all part of the life, and it is surprising how one can keep comfortable in spite of things. We each have two good blankets, and at present are wrapped up in them.

There are nine of us in the tent, six Englishmen, two Canucks, and a U.S.A. One of the cockneys has produced a mandolin from somewhere, — I never saw it before to-day, — and is amusing us with some old tunes. It is funny how men of different sorts manage to chum together

under circumstances of this sort. Two of the Englishmen are young fellows, as nice as any I have ever known; one the son of an English Church clergyman, and I guess of very good family. Two of them are pronounced cockneys, with the humorous disposition and tongue of Sam Weller. One is a big chap from the coal-pit district around Newcastle, alternately pleasant and disagreeable, and one a young farmer from Yorkshire. All of course have been in Canada for a certain length of time. The two Canadians are young fellows who have been working on construction gangs, and are good companions.

The few English papers that one gets hold of occasionally have nothing at all in them about the Mexican situation. If it were not for your letters, I would not know anything at all about it. I am looking forward to seeing a "North American" when you send it. There should be no trouble in getting it through, for I have had several Toronto papers, and the men are getting them all the time.

A sergeant stuck his head into the tent awhile ago and told us that we did not have to go out tonight. Well, I can remember rejoicing at school when holidays were announced, but I do not think such news then was any more welcome than now. We are pretty well done up with work, and a good night's sleep will freshen us up. We have

had supper, stew that I enjoyed, and tea, and I am fixed up comfortably in my blankets with two candles on a biscuit box, shielded from the draft by my tin shrapnel helmet, for illumination. The tent flap is fastened down and everything cosy.

I hope T. R. will start stirring things round for November. For one, I am looking for the United States to take an interest in affairs over here, and I think the time has come when Mr. Wilson's dream of helping things to a finish could come true. Only, it can't be accomplished by conciliatory or neutral methods. The Paris Conference has made it apparent that the Allies will not concede any point in their original demand for the restoration of all invaded territory.

Well, it is nearly eight, and I expect to hear "Lights out" at any minute, so I will stop. There are no bugle calls here, orders are by word of mouth. Much love to mother.

April 13, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

After two days of driving rain and wind, to-day is beautiful. Still breezy, but the sky is blue, flecked with white, and the sun is bright and the air is fresh and clean. Your letters of March 20th and 24th came on the 9th and 11th. Wasn't the parcel enterprising, to beat out a letter that was

mailed four days ahead? Just now, I was reading over your letter about spending your days, "Thursday, Mass at 7.30," and I looked at my watch and it was 12.30; as nearly as I know, five hours is our interval, so for a minute or two, I remembered. It is a great comfort to me to think of your days being full, for I know that this time is, and is going to be, one of the hard places in your life, and that necessity for going ahead is the greatest thing. I had a lovely letter from Mrs. Charlie H. the other day, and she said that she was feeling very deeply for you in anticipation of her own anxiety when C. comes over. It must be bracing to know that so many women are facing the same ordeal and bravely going through with it, helping and comforting each other.

I am keeping a sort of diary; just putting down the dates of different happenings. Whenever I have been brought safe through special dangers, I put a cross opposite the date; I will tell them to you, so that you can make a special thanksgiving. I think you would rather have me do that than just write ahead without saying anything. I have two, now: March 27th and April 10th.

We have just come back from a foot-washing parade at a near-by creek, or rather ditch. After we had washed our feet, we rubbed white oil into them to toughen the skin and prevent blisters. The

toilet things in the parcel were very far from being "coals to Newcastle." They have all been used already, and were what I wanted specially. Now, I want a small sponge and a nail-brush, a comb, and a cake of carbolic or some medicinal soap that is good for irritated skin. I have told you lots of things, you see. I do not mean to send them all at once, but just tell you, as I think of them. Your parcels will always have the things I need and want most. . . .

A soldier must live from day to day, with no thought of the future, just a steadfast purpose of carrying out orders and being stronger and steadier than he naturally is; and faith and trust in God's purpose make it possible for me. Do you not think that the war is making people less selfish in the world, and in the United States? Surely it must, when in so many places people are sacrificing their dear ones and their money for a cause. Even if it seems to some more a question of honor and family, or national tradition, than justice or freedom.

I often think of the rank and file of the German army, and even the junior officers. They are suffering untold hardships and showing magnificent bravery in the face of heavy odds, as much, perhaps more, than the soldiers of the Allies: although, one must be here to realize that men have risen to

a height of courage and endurance in this war that people living in modern civilization never dreamed of. Surely, some gain must come from this tremendous effort and conquest of self, and Germany must not be entirely a loser, when her sons, even if forced, have paid such a price. I hope for a Europe of republics and personal freedom as the only adequate result. Of course, we strain against national characteristics or nature that makes submarines and Zeppelins possible. Such things are the result, it seems to me, of forced acquiescence to tyranny and wrong government, and time must wear it down. The races will never be able to understand each other; but you have heard the cries for reprisal, much more horrible than the deed if carried out, and we know our South, the dealings with the negro there. Freedom, and then the conquering of self are the great hopes that the war holds out, and it is more than worth that.

Do you take the "Atlantic Monthly"? If you don't, do, and send it to me when you have finished, and I will pass it on. I like the things in the almanac. I could not read magazines, but such articles would be a great relief to my mind and keep me in touch. Much love to you both.

Palm Sunday, April 16, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

This is just a note so that I would not let Palm Sunday go by without writing to you. We have cleared our tent out to-day and given everything a good airing, and I let my time get too short. This afternoon was beautifully clear and dry, so it was a good opportunity to get the place cleared up after a rainy week. We had our open-air service at 1.30, and afterward a communion service in the chaplain's tent, for which I was very glad.

Yesterday, your second parcel came, with the chocolate and coffee, towel and socks, and the paper, which I am already using. The coffee and prepared chocolate are splendid things. I thought of asking for them once or twice, but never did. Now, I can have some good hot drinks, for one can always boil water. The socks are lovely and soft, and I am glad to have the soft towel too. Your parcels are always the best, because you are the one that wants them to be the most, and I can feel the love and thought in them. As for the "staple fruit,"[1] as you call it, I would not want you to ever even think of it; so let 's not. To-day came the Boy Scout knife from father, and some clippings I was very glad to get. The knife is just

[1] Tobacco.

the sort of a one I need, and a beauty. I will try not to lose it.

This is such a short little note, that it hardly seems worth sending, yet I will. To-morrow, I should have one from you to answer, and any way I will write. Now it is time to fall in. Very much love to both of you, and to the dear people at "1606."

April 18, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter dated March 31st came yesterday, and I am writing this on the paper enclosed. I have the pad, too, for the parcel came a day sooner than the letter, no, two days. I wrote you on Sunday that I had received it, and father's knife and newspaper clippings, too; all parcels now have come sooner than the letters written the same time. That seems funny, does it not? Your parcels are so dear, and breathe of you. The little white towel will be comfortable sometimes, and the chocolate I enjoyed so much. It seems to be an article of food which I do not grow tired of, and it adds a pleasant taste to our utilitarian meals. The pad and envelopes are fine, and you could have thought of nothing better than the coffee and liquid chocolate. I practically do not drink water, at all, except when it is boiled in tea, and now I can make

myself a hot, refreshing boiled drink between meals. It has been rainy and cold almost constantly this month, and a tent, although it keeps out the weather, is not like a house, so hot coffee and chocolate are luxuries, and you have sent me the best of both.

Yesterday I had yours and father's letters of March 31st, and a fraternity notice forwarded, a dear little colored picture of the "frog footman," from Billy, and a lovely note from Father S., saying that I was being prayed for twice daily in the school chapel. How much that means to me. You say to tell you what your "bit" can be. Dear mother, that is it. You are praying not just for me, but all of us out here, and the German soldiers too. I often think of you at early mass and in "St. Saviour's," and so many other times of the day, praying. That is the great thing, for it all lies with God, and in His own way He always answers prayers, so when I think that you and father and Father W. and Father S. and so many others are praying, it is a great comfort and strength. When I am under fire, I pray not only for protection, or a worthy dying, but for courage not to lose my control and to help others.

This is one of my "green envelope" letters, so I can write out. Our work is not so dangerous, or, what is worse, does not require so much en-

durance, as that of the infantry who are on duty for two or three days, and constantly subject to attacks or bombardments. We work for three or four hours, and then go back where we can rest and get a new strength for our spirit; and then, of course, our danger just now is not great, though once or twice we have been in bad positions. That reminds me that I have another "cross day" for you, April 14th. We never know when we will be called on. As the spring advances there are indications of a new activity. So you can pray and I rest in the strength of your prayers. I could easily write you without letting you know that there was danger, but I know you are brave and strong; I can feel it, and you are always near me; so I tell you special things in order that you can pray specially, and give thanks specially. The one great thing I need is courage and self-control in danger; not only for myself, but for others. There is nothing which so encourages and gives heart to the weak as the strength and coolness of others; and there are many boys here sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, full of bravery, but too young for a man's steadiness. Pray for them, too.

Yesterday I had another parcel from Norse cottage, handkerchiefs, candy, chocolate, and cigarettes, from those dear people who have not enough to think of, with three of their own sons out here.

I have gotten this far without saying anything of the wonderful news I had in a letter from Toronto, the other day, that O. was on his way home. You must know before you get this, but is n't it wonderful; and what a reward and help to Mrs. H. for all she has suffered and borne and given. I do not know how long he will be able to stay, but I hope it will be great happiness for them all.

There is something I have wanted to ask you, in case, as Dean S. put it, the soldier should "pass through battle into peace." Will you write to Nurse H.? Otherwise, I do not know how she will get the news. I am glad that I have been able to write all this to-day, for I wanted you to know and be with me; yet I wanted you to know, too, that I am happy and not in any fear or strain, but just as you are, going about my work, each day, trusting in the comfort of being "safe in the hands" of the "one disposing Power."

I so love the little things Billy sends, and his thinking of me. Sue just sends them in an envelope without comment. I must send him a letter. The socks you sent are fine. But now, I have plenty. When I need more, I will say. I love your pictures more every day. It is strange that I could not see the depth in them at first. I will look forward to when you can send me a pansy. I love them, and the thought of the flowers and

the little garden. The Girard estate will soon be fluttering green leaves and grass. A whole year now since I have been away. Much love, dear mother. Good-bye for a little while.

Boulogne-sur-Mer
April 27, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

The dearest old lady, who is a regular hospital visitor, has just been to see me and given me this paper to write to you. It is really the first chance I have had, for the Sisters here are terribly busy and one hates to bother them. I was wounded in the left shoulder by a piece of shrapnel, very early, about 12.30, Easter morning. I asked one of the boys who carried me into the dressing-station, to write a note to Aunt G., asking her to cable you that my wound was only slight, and I hope that she has done so, before now. I do so hope that you have not received official notification, anyway before you heard from me. Everything would be fine, were it not for the fear of your anxiety. The wound is a small one and it has never given a minute's pain.

I was taken to a clearing hospital in a field ambulance, arriving about 6 A.M., Sunday, and left Tuesday afternoon, arriving here about 11 P.M. We came on the hospital train, which was a beauty.

This is a lovely hospital, in a big casino, right on the seashore, and every one is lovely to me. Yesterday the doctor removed the shrapnel, a little round bullet, so now I am all right. It went into my back, just below the shoulder blade, and came out in front, not much of a wound. My shoulder is a little stiff, but does not hurt at all, and I sleep well and eat everything I can get. To-day, a lot of us had our beds carried out on the lawn in the sunshine and were there all day, with a graphophone for our diversion. To-morrow, or the next day, I am booked to go to England. Is not that fine? It is like having an Easter vacation.

I will write again very soon, and cable my address when I know it. Very much love to you all.

King George Hospital
London, May 26, 1916

DEAR FATHER WARD:

Your letter of April 7th with the Easter card enclosed was forwarded to me from France, and I received your letter of May 5th last week. Both gave me happiness, and the card is beautiful. Does it not seem a coincidence that the Lenten season so exactly confined my stay in the war zone? We landed at the dock in France shortly after midnight on Ash Wednesday morning, March 8th, and I was wounded as nearly to midnight on Easter

morning as it could possibly have been. I had looked at my watch about five minutes to twelve, and as nearly as I can judge was hit about ten or fifteen minutes later. It is a Lent that I am not likely to forget.

I am entirely well now; the wound is healed and whatever shock I suffered has disappeared, so that I feel ready and anxious to return to the work which I had hardly started. Six weeks seem very inconsiderable when the majority of the men have been out there for six months and a great many for eighteen. I think that I will be discharged from hospital in a few days, then have a short furlough before rejoining my base company. Then probably there will be a week or two waiting for a draft, so that it will be a month anyway before I rejoin my unit at the front.

The life out there is certainly very much disassociated from that of an ordinary mortal; in fact, you can only realize it while you are actually there. I have completely lost my memory of the realization already. In a way, it is living in the constant shadow of death. The hardships in living, wet clothes, rough food, lack of washing, are only incidents which one might undergo anywhere. But there is always the consciousness that one must soon go back to face danger. Yet the surprising thing is, how easily the burden of anxiety is thrown

off, once you leave the firing line. In our case, of course, we usually reached camp on our return about 4 A.M., with a feeling of wonderful peace, ate a breakfast of hot tea and biscuit and cheese, and then had a dreamless and very refreshing sleep; woke up about eleven for our real breakfast of bacon. Then the rest of the day until supper time was spent in a care-free spirit.

When you are on the firing line, unless the fire is rather fierce, and always in the lulls which come, there is the same feeling of a strain slipping off one's shoulders. So that actually the time that one is under a real strain is not very long. I suppose one of the greatest fears a man has to fight is that his nerve will give way or that he will be cowardly in some way.

I have found in every trying circumstance that praying is a wonderful comfort. I do not know how a man can go through it who has not a belief in God to fall back on.

Your letters help me very much, with the knowledge of your prayer and what you say about God's presence. A man fully realizes his own physical futility in the face of modern warfare. There is nothing then to fall back on but his will power, and I know that mine is worthless excepting I have the spiritual help which comes from my belief in God. Your words all help and strengthen

that, so are and will be a great help to me in the future.

I will write again when I know my time for going back.

Very much love to you and Miss Ward.

III

LETTERS FROM THE FRENCH FRONT

O Paradise!
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through —

III

LETTERS FROM THE FRENCH FRONT

British Officers' Club
France, December 2, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am at the base for the second time, and expect to join my new unit in a day or two. I telegraphed my address to you yesterday and you should have it by now, but any way I will write it out so that you can be sure: Lieutenant E. A. Abbey, Fourth Canadian Mounted Rifles, B.E.F., France. I meant to wire you as soon as I was gazetted, but the whole thing was an indefinite proceeding.

Last Wednesday a week we were told to go at once to London and get our outfit. I left Thursday morning and arrived in London about noon on Thursday. I went first to the Pay Office and then out to Chelsea Lodge. Aunt G. was there. I had wired her that I was coming, and we at once went to a tailor's in Pall Mall and I was measured for a uniform. Friday morning I went with Aunt G. to the tailor's for a fitting, and then to the Army and Navy Stores (London Wana-

maker's), and there we purchased a variety of things. I am going to write you a complete list in a minute. We went back to Chelsea Lodge for lunch, and then to the Stores again to proceed with the work in hand. Saturday morning I went to the Stores for a fitting and then to the Pay Office, where I found they had received authority to give me my outfit allowance of fifty pounds. Saturday afternoon my uniform arrived from the tailor's and I went with Aunt G. to tea at the American Embassy.

Sunday morning I went to eight o'clock service at Westminster Abbey, and back to Chelsea Lodge for breakfast. Then I went over to Battersea Park and called on Mrs. Charlie, and found Charlie there on his leave. It was fine to see him again, and he seemed very well and happy. I stayed there until two o'clock, and then went back to Chelsea Lodge and went to the three o'clock service at St. Paul's. It was the first time I had been there, and I was greatly impressed with the beauty of the place. After service we went to tea with the J.'s and after that I went to dinner with the L.'s.

Monday morning I took my uniform back to the tailor to be altered, and then went on to the Army and Navy Stores to finish shopping, which took up most of the day; Tuesday morning, more

alterations. Tuesday afternoon I went shopping by myself and managed to get a few little Christmas things, some little toys for the children, but nothing much.

Here is a list of my outfit:

1 cap and sword-belt and stick.
1 coat.
1 pair breeches and 1 trousers (dress).
1 coat, 1 breeches, trench.
1 overcoat.
1 trench-coat, waterproof, fleece-lined.
1 pair of high field boots, leather.
1 pair of marching-boots.
1 pair of leather leggins.
1 pair of high rubber boots, leather soles.
1 pair of rubber trousers.
1 woollen sweater coat.
1 leather vest.
4 flannel shirts, collars and neckties.
3 suits heavy wool underwear.
2 pairs flannel pajamas.
1 canvas sleeping-bag and valise combined.
1 canvas kit-bag (haversack).
2 towels.
Electric torch and whistle.
Several military books.
A wrist watch.

Of course I have socks, handkerchiefs, etc.; as you see, I am very complete and comfortable.

Wednesday morning we spent packing up, and

just before I left in the afternoon Mrs. L. came in, so I was able to say Good-bye to her again. Then Wednesday night I arrived at the C.M.S., and early the next morning started off again and arrived here yesterday. In a day or two I should be with my unit.

When I went back to Crowborough, I found three letters from you and one from father. Yours were written just after the election.

Well, dearest mother, I must stop now for a time, but I will write very often. Your letters are my great comfort and inspiration. You are so full of facing things squarely and bravely. I know it will be hard for you, but you will bear through bravely and I am happy that I can represent you.

Love to father.

Canadian Base, December 4, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

We are still here, and it is unsettled how soon we will be sent "up the line." I think very soon, and I know I will find mail waiting me there. The mails for Canada for Christmas close to-day, and so this morning there was a tremendous pile of letters to be censored. There is a large number of troops here. All the officers not on duty, about twenty-five of us, sat here in the ante-room of the officers' mess and read and initialled letters

from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. I read hundreds of letters to mothers, fathers, wives, sisters, sweethearts, brothers, children, and chums, all cheery, and concerned with the happiness of Christmas at home and making light of hardships and the future.

You know that I think the men in the ranks are the finest in the army. It is they who have made a wall of their bodies to hold back the advancing menace, and now are storming back. The physical courage and sacrifice is higher than the guiding mind, great and necessary and unselfish as this latter is. I am glad that I had the privilege of being with them for those short weeks last spring.

Your description of the mission at Sagada is wonderful, and the engineering side is appealing. Father S. must be a splendid man to accomplish so much, and one does not wonder at his apprehensions in the face of the present disappointing conditions in the country, but we cannot give up our responsibility; it is our country, and we must fight to keep it whole and bring back the ideals, just as the North fought to keep it whole in '61. We must constantly stand and bear witness for and help such big men as Theodore Roosevelt who are our leaders. There are a great many ways we can help. The Church has the greatest power, and after that the schools and our children. We want

children like those who shouted "Vive la France" in Germany when the war was started.

And now I must wish you and father a happy, happy Christmas, as I cannot send a card. Wherever I am on Christmas Day I will be keeping it with you. You must think of me as very comfortable now, especially in the matter of eating. Even at the front when in billets, the officers' mess is part of the institution. I will have share in a servant to take care of my things. Here it is very comfortable. We are three in a tent and have our sleeping-bags, which are very warm and comfortable. The washing conveniences are good and the mess excellent, — breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. There is a big ante-room for reading, writing, etc.

Dearest love to you both, and a happy Christmas. You will know that I am helping you in this big, shadowy time.

France, December 4, 1916

DEAR FATHER.

I have been here at the base since Friday A.M., and expect to go up the line to-day. Things happen pretty quickly when they get started. I was in London for a week, and have a very good outfit. I sent the list to mother, so that she will know just what I have, and that I am very com-

fortable. The Fourth C.M.R. is an Ontario battalion, I think, and came over originally as cavalry, but at present it is infantry, and I am looking forward to belonging to the main branch of the army. There is no question that at the present time the infantry is first.

As was to be expected my mail is all astray somewhere, but I suppose it will gradually catch me up. I found a letter, dated November 15th, from you on my return to Crowborough: the first word I have had from you about the election. Nothing seems to affect your continual rush. I wish you could get off and come over here for a visit. Things are very quiet, though. You must bring mother over for the Peace Jubilee "après la Guerre." Affairs are beginning to take another far, far-away turn. The Rumanian reverse is not very pleasant.

I have just finished a very good dinner in the mess and am now sitting in the lounge, listening to some very good music by the band. There is much enjoyment in an officer's life back of the line, but there things boil down pretty well. Apparently we will not move to-day. There is much I would like to tell you, but now that I am responsible for my own letters, it is going to be harder, instead of easier, to write. I am looking forward eagerly to getting back to the realities, and it is great inspi-

ration to know that you and mother are glad for me to go too.

While I was in London, getting outfitted, I had tea with Mrs. Page at the Embassy and dinner with the L.'s. I am going now to see if I can hunt up an English church. This morning I moved up here, so did not have a chance. I will write often and give you all the news that the censor considers safe, which is not much.

Much love to mother.

France, December 8, 1916

DEAR FATHER:

Still at the base, though we expect to move up the line at any moment. Things are very comfortable here. We have a very good mess and practically nothing to do in the way of duty, except censoring mail, but I have done all the sitting around that I care to, and am anxious to get down to work of some sort. All my mail is forwarded to the battalion, so I can hear nothing from home until I arrive there.

We have had plenty of opportunity to go into the city, and I have enjoyed poking around and airing my "rotten" French. There is something childish and eager about the French that I like very much, and I would love to live here for a while, but not now. Every night I have that wasted-day

feeling — no one enjoys leave better than I do, but when I am on duty I want to do something.

I hope that your rush of work is over, and things smoother. The chief item of interest here is the new Premier, and our greatest distress the fall of Bucharest. There is lots of work ahead for us all.

Love to mother, and a very happy Christmas. We will be together again for the next, I hope. Probably we move soon, and then my letters will be more interesting.

December 10, 1916

Dearest Mother:

I am still at the base, but have orders to join my battalion some time to-day, and am very glad. Doing nothing at all for a week has been a very unpleasant experience, especially as the camp is crowded with men undergoing rigorous training, and living in very uncomfortable conditions; the contrast is too glaring. The changed condition I am living under was no part of our desire in this, so when I am thrown into a place where there is that and nothing else, it is revolting.

War news as one gets it here is not encouraging; especially the tide in Rumania seems going against us. We have a tendency, I think, to be too optimistic and too comfortable and sure of

things. That is especially so in England. As a matter of fact, though we shall win in the end, there is struggle and bitterness ahead for us all. I think the new English Premier will be a great advantage to us. Every one has been inspired with his ability to get ahead with things. The crying need everywhere to-day is for leaders, and they are pitifully few.

Well, dearest mother, you must not think I am not cheerful, for I am, and am looking ahead eagerly; and you will know by my letters how much happier I am when I feel that I am where I should be. Dearest love to you and father, and another Happy Christmas, if this is in time.

December 13, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am writing this in a little French train, very near to my journey's end. I wrote you Sunday morning that I was due to leave the base that afternoon. It turned out that several of us had been told off to conduct drafts to their units in the field. I had to take men to three battalions of another division, and it was quite an undertaking. There were rations for emergency and for the journey to be taken over and distributed, and the men loaded on the train and generally looked after. We stopped at one place for half a day, which meant de-train-

ing and re-entraining. We reached our journey's end very late last night, and I was able to turn over my party intact, which was better luck than some had, several men having been lost *en route*, which is not unusual.

Four of us spent the night in a French town of a fair size. There were, however, only two hotels, and after knocking the peevish proprietors to their second-story windows, we were assured, in spite of vigorous protest on our part, that they were "complet": "Plus de chambres, messieurs." I was the only one of the party who could speak French at all, and as you know I am not unusually proficient; and the more desperate I became the less words I could think of, especially standing in the middle of the street, talking to a second-story window. My final effort was a very commanding: "Il faut," upon which madame replied, "Il ne faut pas," and closed her shutters. After three days "en chemin de fer" of war-time, in the early hour of a bitterly cold raw morning, things were not very promising.

We located the office of the town major, and a sleepy orderly offered us the hospitality of his tiled floor. It was very stuffy and smelly, so two of us did not accept. We found half a dozen big touring-cars, with curtains down, parked outside the headquarters' building, and climbed inside, re-

moved boots, and made beds out of the seat cushions. I found a blanket and a big goatskin rug in mine, and with my fleece-lined trench-coat to help, made myself luxuriously warm and comfortable and had a delightful sleep. At seven this morning we returned to the hotel and found madame in a better humor, had a good wash-up and very good breakfast, — omelet, "café au lait," and bread and butter. Then we found a good barber-shop and had a shave, and took a walk through the town, purchasing a few needed articles; then went to the railway station and put our luggage on this train, which is proceeding leisurely on its way.

We are very comfortable in a first-class coach, entirely surrounded by gray upholstery, and after a change at noon should get to our unit in the middle of the afternoon. These little trains travel between stations at about four miles per hour, and stop at every place for at least half an hour, though no one gets on or off, so one just takes life easy, and does not worry about time. I have thoroughly enjoyed all this experience, seeing the few French cities that I have, and the opportunity for talking. I would like to have a small French grammar, if you can pick one up, to brush up on my verbs and vocabulary. I would infinitely rather be here in France than Flanders. The atmosphere is entirely different and the people are fascinating.

Well, we are getting near our change place, and I think I can mail this there.

December 16, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am writing this from my dug-out in the trenches, this being the second day I have been in. Christmas Day we hope to be in billets back of the line. I wrote you from the train on Wednesday. Wednesday night we went to a reinforcement camp, where we spent the night, billeted comfortably in a farmhouse; then Thursday we moved up to our battalion transport line, and spent the night here in billets in a small village. Yesterday we came into the trenches where our battalion is, and were assigned to companies. My company is "D." Things are very comfortable here, and as good as can be expected.

You must not worry, but just pray and go ahead living bravely, conscious that I am strengthened by your strength. God grant that things may be right in the end. I will write as often as I can, but probably my letters will be short, because there is little I can tell you, beyond my own safety and good spirits, and then it is a little hard to get letters written properly excepting in billets. Yesterday at transport I found a letter from father, dated November 7th, so you can see how my mail has been delayed. I am

eagerly looking forward to the time when it catches up. I have been on duty and now just have time to catch a mail with this, so I must stop.

Dearest mother, you know that you have all my love and gratitude, and I will try to do my best.

December 18, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am still in the trenches, my tour not being over until next Saturday; I am not in the front line, but in the supports. We only stay in the front line three days at a time. I have just been reading over the little Manual of Prayers for Workers which you sent me some time ago. It is fine, especially the plea for duty before everything. There is a paragraph by Dean Church on "Manliness," which takes for granted that man is called to a continual struggle with difficulties, and makes it a point of honor not to be dismayed by them; and the "quality which seizes on the idea of duty as something which leaves a man no choice"; that is the quality which I need most now, the strength to do my duty, and I pray for it hourly, and I know that you do it for me too.

When I get out into billets my letters will be more interesting, but here there is little or nothing to tell you now. I can tell you, though, that my thoughts are with you and father and with your

anxieties and cares. You must just go ahead bravely with your duties as I must. Remember that I am well and happy and of a good heart.

December 18, 1916

DEAR FATHER:

Many happy returns of yesterday. I had you in my thoughts all day, but did not get a letter off. So far the only letter I have had from home since I have been here is a long one from you, dated November 10th, and it was very welcome I can tell you. I am hoping some of mother's will catch up to me by to-night. I have been in the trenches since I arrived on Friday, but by Christmas I hope to be out in billets. Things are busy here and it is the place to realize war. All my hope and prayer is that I will have strength and courage to do my duty as you would have me. I am very comfortable, happy and in good spirits, so you can have a peaceful mind regarding me.

Dearest love to you and mother.

Christmas Day, 1916

DARLING MOTHER:

To-day is my second Christmas away from home in my twenty-eight years. What joy it will be if God grants us one together again after this long

separation. I am going to start by telling you where I am. Picture a little French village with one long, narrow, cobbled street. At one end the street leaves the village and crosses over a deep railway cut and then wanders away through the rolling country. I should have told you that the village is on a hilltop. From the railway bridge, the street runs perhaps a hundred yards and then turns 90° to the left and runs downhill, but before you get to that there are two small streets on the right. The houses are low, one storied affairs of stone or white plaster, and tiled roofs and are lined right along the street, so that they are only about twenty feet apart. There are several larger houses with courtyards in front, with high walls. It is all beautifully picturesque in spite of my description.

D Company billet is just at the turn of the main road. You go under a big gray stone archway, into a big quadrilateral courtyard about two hundred and fifty feet across. Just on the left is a two-story farmhouse and beyond a barn, and then stables all around the court to the arch again. All the buildings are gray brick and stone with red tiled roofs and rather old and weather-worn. There is a brick duck pond in the centre of the court, and a big collection of French farm wagons and army limbers and piles of hay. Altogether it is a very picturesque old place, and less than four miles from

that famous streak of mud which separates the Allies and the Germans.

The men are living in the loft of the barn, a big long place, and they have straw and bunks and brazier fires, but it is pretty cold and dark there, just the same. Still, the magnificent spirit of making the best of grim situations keeps them happy and cheerful. They sit at the long table with candles, and write letters, play cards, and so on, or around the braziers, and sing and tell stories. Just now they are patiently waiting for their Christmas dinner, which is due in about fifteen minutes. I hope that it will be a good one.

We, the company officers, are waiting to go over and visit them while they are eating. Our billet is a room upstairs in a farmhouse. There are six of us, and we have cot-beds made of chicken wire, nailed on "two by fours," and our sleeping-bags and blankets, so we are very comfortable. There is a fireplace in the room and we have a charcoal brazier in it to make things cheerful, and a table and our possessions. It is the old familiar life of which one reads so much, and because it is so like a story, there is a certain touch of romance; D Company officers are especially nice chaps; it would be hard to find a nicer half-dozen to be thrown together, and you can imagine that we are thrown very close together. We live, sleep, and eat in

the same room or dug-out, sharing duties and comforts.

I said I thought it would be hard to find a nicer half-dozen. I think it would be impossible. They are the type of men I like. First, there is the Captain, a Military Cross man, who made a wonderful record at the Somme. He is a perfect soldier, modest and gentle, and yet as firm as a rock; cool and confident and determined. Then Captain G., who is pleasant and sensible; Lieutenant B., a big, strong, good-natured chap, who used to teach school; Lieutenant C., a little chap who is a newspaper writer, and very funny, and keeps every one's spirits up; Lieutenant J., a boy of somewhat the Brinton H. type. All of them are a clean lot, with high living ideals.

We came out of the line the day before yesterday, Saturday, about noon, and marched here. Our water tank had been hit by a shell, so there had been no washing for three days, and living three days in a muddy ditch is not conducive to cleanliness; we were simply plastered with mud from head to foot. It did not take us long to get our muddy things off and changed into clean things, washed, shaved, etc. Then we went up to the battalion mess, which we have when we are out in billets, and had a very good dinner.

Sunday morning at eight our chaplain had an

early celebration in the Y.M.C.A. hut, which I went to, and, by the way, we have a splendid chaplain. Then I spent the morning straightening up my things and getting them clean, with my batman's assistance. In the afternoon we went and had a bath, which was a great luxury, and then at six the captain took the whole company to an evening service in an old factory which had been fixed up as a cinema hall. It was just a big brick building, bare to the roof, with benches and a platform at one end, lighted up with two or three lamps. The floor was tiled and the inside of the walls have been whitewashed long since. It was draughty and cold, but the place was filled and the service was a hearty one. We sang Christmas hymns, "Hark, the herald angels," and some that I did not know, and had an address. I do not think that I will ever forget the circumstances. It reminded me of the picture that I sent you of the French soldiers.

This morning the "Padre," as they call the chaplain, had another early service at eight, to which I went. This afternoon I walked to another village about five miles away, where Charlie H.'s engineer company is billeted. We are in the same division, but when I got there I found that he was in the trenches; still I managed to get him on the 'phone and wished him Merry Christmas, and he asked me to come to dinner with him to-morrow.

It is strange to be back again in this life at the Front, and now I am more really in it than ever, doing the actual infantry duty. Two nights last week I was out in "No Man's Land," between our lines and the Germans, in charge of a barbed-wire party, and managed to feel quite at home and comfortable there. It is a wonderful experience, and, if one can live through it, will change life. I am sure now that I can never go back and go on with my own work for myself. If God wills that I do go back, I must go into service of some sort. Perhaps I will be able to go into the Church, and your long cherished hopes and prayers will be fulfilled. Life, here, is such a feeble little thing, so uncertain from hour to hour, that one cannot help knowing that it is a gift and entirely in God's hands. I desperately need that courage of duty to help me in my work, and if I have it now to face death, then I must have it afterward to face life.

It is very late now, so I must stop, with my dearest Christmas love to you and father.

December 27, 1916

DEAR FATHER:

I am lucky enough to be in billets for Christmas. When I landed here my battalion was in the trenches, so I went right in, and was assigned to

D Company. It was the most fortunate thing that could have happened to me. . . .

I discovered that Charlie H. was not very far away, and last night I rode over and had dinner with him. The captain lent me his horse and groom, or rather I rode the groom's horse and he rode the captain's, which is a little wild. I told the groom I could n't ride very well, so he rode beside me and I got along famously. It is the first time I ever rode a horse in my life, but I made up my mind that I would have to start some time, and it was inky dark, so no one could see how badly I was doing it. It was nine or ten miles there and back, and I enjoyed it tremendously. Charlie was delighted to see me and I had a fine dinner with him at his mess. He had invited me over the 'phone. After I had been with him for about half an hour, I noticed that he was wearing the Military Cross ribbon. It was the first I knew that he had won it. I congratulated him, but I knew he would hate to have me ask about it, so I did n't, but I know it was for something at the Somme. Is n't it wonderful that both he and H. should have won it? They are certainly a great family.

I wonder what you think of all the peace propaganda. Imagine Germany fighting for the protection and freedom of small nations! No one was more astonished than Germany at that, or quicker

to deny it. Well, it is a strange state of affairs. We must buckle down now and win a decisive victory. Time is getting ripe.

Things are going well with me, and I am in fine spirits. Help mother in her anxiety. God will answer our prayers and bring us all safe through. It is our share in this great struggle against evil.

December 29, 1916

DEAREST MOTHER:

This is the first letter on a little leather writing-pad that Mrs. L. sent me for Christmas. I am just back in the trenches and writing from the company dug-out. On Sunday morning I am going to be sent on a general instruction course about ten miles back of the line, and will be there for a week, or perhaps two, so this turn in the trenches will be a very easy one for me.

Yesterday I received a letter from Father W. addressed to me here. It is the first I have had, and I know that you have written several, so they are sure to arrive in a day or two now, and I will know what you think of my being a lieutenant. Father W.'s letter was lovely, and he sent me a beautiful card. The week in billets was very pleasant, and I told you about our comfortable room and mess. There was very little work to be done, just some cleaning; altogether it was a good rest. I do hope that

you are well and keeping happy in the knowledge that we are taking the right part in this struggle.

The papers lately have been full of peace talk. It may open the way to discussion, which will be profitable, but there can be no doubt that we must fight on until Germany is willing to make full reparation. The world and civilization must be safeguarded against a repetition of this horrible thing, and we are all willing to pay the necessary price. When I think of these boys out here, putting up with the most unheard-of hardships and difficulties and in the constant shadow of death, my heart goes out to them, and I only pray that I may be worthy to be with them, and, if possible, help them through as an officer should. Somehow my little bronze crucifix came off my coat on my journey up here. I have worn it constantly since you sent it, and now I feel badly not to have it. Can you send me another?

Darling mother, all my love is with you, and my thoughts. I will write to you very often. My love to father and Susan and her dear family.

January 1, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

This is the first day of the year, which I hope and pray will bring us all peace. What a strange time we have come to live in, with nearly the whole

world involved in a terrible struggle and conflict. How little you thought, when you were a child, with the echo of the terrible Civil War in your heart, that you would some day have a son in the battle line! And now, although we know that Germany is desperately anxious for peace and Austria even more, yet we know, too, that we must go ahead and fight until the invaded countries are free and the menace to future generations destroyed.

When one thinks of the thousands of men who have given their lives that this victory may be won, and when one realizes that now as we keep steadily on, we can surely win, the thought of anything else is weak and dishonorable and unworthy of God who is guiding us. I often think of Nurse Cavell and how bravely and calmly she gave her life for the cause; that should help you, too, for she was a woman just as you are, and the same sort of woman, I imagine. Thousands of splendid men have given their lives, and women have given their sons and husbands, and we coming after must offer the same thing and be willing to give it, too, for it is a common cause. If we stop and think for a minute of the terror and misery and tragedy that has been wrought, and we know that this can be spared future generations if we press on to the finish, how little one life seems for one to give, and yet it is all that is asked of us.

Mother, if you could only see these boys in the ranks, cheerfully enduring the most frightful hardships, and facing horrors with the most inspiring and indomitable courage and determination, your heart would nearly burst with joy and pride, and you would know that God was going to give us victory. Just now the trenches are in a frightful condition of mud and water, and it is utterly impossible for the men to keep dry or to have dry dug-outs to sleep in. They are in a state of misery, as far as physical comfort goes, for days at a time, and yet they stand all night, often for sixteen hours at a stretch, in pouring rain and under intermittent fire, looking out over the parapet into the darkness of "No Man's Land," guarding humanity; and if you walk along and ask them how they are getting on, the answer will be a cheery "Everything fine, sir." Then they will go out at night on working parties and stand in water up to their knees and try to shovel mud that won't shovel, for four hours at a time and perhaps without any supper; and let a bombardment start, they will quietly take their posts in exposed positions and stay there or drop. This is just trench routine. You know what they did at the Somme, advancing into the mouth of an indescribable hell.

These are just New Year's thoughts, and come chiefly from the thought of that final peace which

I hope this year will bring, and the peace which the enemy is spreading abroad in a final endeavor to stem the tide.

As for me, I am just starting two very pleasant weeks, attending a divisional training school, quite a distance back of the line and in a very comfortable billet. I will write you more about it, but now I must catch the mail. I did not like to leave the others in that slough of mud, but it was orders, and it will make me more efficient in the end. Dearest mother, I am full of love for you and father and all at home, and want to be worthy of you. I have had hard luck with my mail, but will have it soon.

January 3, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

Fortune has favored me, in a way, by sending me out of the trenches for two weeks at a time when they were in a frightfully muddy condition. I am at a training school, a short distance back of the line, taking a general course of instruction. The information I am getting is very valuable, and my living conditions are very comfortable.

I am billeted in a big, old-fashioned French farmhouse, the variety that you go into from the road, through an archway, and find yourself in a big court-yard. In this particular one, which is of gray

stone with red tiled roofs, there is what appears to be a high wall along the road, with an arch at the right hand end. When you get inside you see that the wall is the back of a line of stables, and there is a similar line on the right. The court itself is about two hundred feet square, and filled up with the usual piles of straw and old wagons. There is a big barn on the left, and at the back, facing the entrance, a big house. I have a large square room, with a red tiled floor and a stove and a smaller room opening off it with a very comfortable bed. I brought a man with me to keep my things clean and look after the room, light the fires in the evening, etc., and so I live like an aristocrat.

There is a very good mess and the meals are very enjoyable. Our hours are from 8.30 A.M. until 5 P.M., and an hour from 8.30 to 9.30 in the evening, which does not leave very much outside for writing or reading. Dinner is a parade and usually a long drawn out, tiresome affair, which takes from 7 till 8.30, so practically our only free time is from 5 to 7 and after 9.30.

The chief thing of interest in the war news at present is all the peace propaganda, notes coming from every direction, thick and fast. This morning's paper said that the Allies' reply to Berlin had been favorably received in the U.S.A. I know that your sentiments echo it. To accept any terms of

Germany's now, or even to discuss them, would be worse than folly. We are fighting for a peaceful future, and the only hope for that is to shatter the Prussian military power and prospects. Rumanian news is still unpleasant, and may lengthen things, but we know that victory is coming, so we can afford to wait quietly until the tide turns. I am in fine condition and spirits, and am thankful to be here with a chance to accomplish something.

Dearest love to mother. My letters are short, but they will be frequent.

January 4, 1917

DARLING MOTHER:

Things are going well at the school and I am learning new and valuable lessons. It is an indication of the thoroughness of this war, that the training of officers and men is continuous, and methods and equipment are constantly improved. The lessons of two months ago are cancelled and something utterly different taught. It is this sleepless energy and the straining of every mind that will bring us victory in the end.

To-night I had a wonderful surprise, there was a batch of mail for me: a letter from you, one from father, four from Toronto, and a Christmas card from my old resident engineer on the C.P.R. Yours and father's were both dated December 8th,

so I have missed two anyway, but the last I had before that was dated November 24th. The others will probably come. It is wonderful that my mail has had so few mishaps when others have lost so much. Aunt G. sent me a parcel from London on December 3d, with some underwear and things I left behind by mistake, and it has never reached me. That, so far as I know, is the first parcel I have ever lost.

You can imagine what joy it was to have a letter from you, after waiting so long. You have so answered my thoughts, as to the event of my finishing my work out here. It is a tremendous comfort to think of you facing the issue and "carrying on" so bravely. After all, that is what we are called on to do in this life, wherever we are, and the final moment for all of us may come at any time. We both trust in God's will and direction; for the rest, it is the business of the hour. How wonderful it will be if we can be together again at home. You are right to be praying for my courage; that is my greatest need and much depends on it.

Do you remember that I used to give you dates for thanksgiving for mercies shown to me? Another one is December 20th.

Germany's attitude toward the smaller neutral states is becoming threatening. Surely the United

States cannot suffer another violation of neutral territory.

Dearest mother, Good-night. One of my chief helps and desires now is writing to you, so you may be sure letters are always on the way.

January 8, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Yesterday another little letter came from you, dated December 15th, only a note you wrote to catch an extra mail. It is a trial to have had things in the post line go so consistently wrong, but it is to be expected, I suppose. There has been trans-channel trouble lately, and then the Christmas congestion would naturally cause delay. Parcels have not come, and the letters which I received from you since arriving in France are dated November 24th, 25th, December 8th and 15th. You can easily fill in the gaps. I know there are many, and father's of November 10th, November 24th, and December 8th. One of these days I will have a big batch. I hope it will be soon. I know it will be a disappointment to you that they have n't come, especially the Christmas parcel and wishes, but I know the love, and it will be all the same when I do have them. Perhaps mine to you are missing in the same way. Father W.'s letter of December 5th came right through, and was the first I had addressed "Lieut." Do not

think that I am unhappy or disappointed; it is a foregone conclusion that one misses out in mail when you make a change, and from now on, things will come regularly and the others will catch up gradually and be all the more welcome after the wait.

We started on our second week of the course today. Part of the divisional staff are moving to this village for quarters and have taken over the billets, so I have lost my nice farmhouse. We have all moved into a big hut, which is fitted up with bunks and has two good stoves and is really remarkably comfortable. I have my sleeping-bag and an extra blanket and a canvas water-bucket, for toilet purposes. To actually live in a regular house with the customary perquisites, without the knowledge that it would only last a week, would be a wonderful feeling after this camping experience. This is my fifteenth month. The dug-out living is still new to me, but I suppose I will soon be used to it too.

We have had some beautiful days here. It hardly seems possible that it is January, and I am still in love with the country. There are rolling fields and farm lands, picked out by tree-bordered roads, and one can usually see a half-dozen villages on the horizon, with the inevitable church spire, and on the hilltops are a sprinkling of long-armed windmills. The country roads are very straight and well-paved,

and invariably lined on each side with high poplars. One thing you would notice are the big life-sized crucifixes one meets along the roads, in prominent places. Some of the crosses are made of real trees. Generally there is a little iron gate and hedge-lined approach. Then, too, there are little shrines with the image of the Virgin in them. You come on these in the most unexpected places. Yesterday I saw one in a niche in the gable end of a very ordinary-looking brick house.

The news one finds in the papers nowadays seems to portend things. I do not exactly know what. The conquest of Rumania seems practically complete, and yet it has not been an entirely satisfactory victory. There is much said of the possibility of Von Bernstorff's recall and a more definite policy on the part of the United States. One thing is sure, the Allies are going to make a determined effort to force peace, a righteous and permanent peace.

Your last letter said that all were well at home. It is a comfort to think of the home life going steadily and bravely ahead. Dearest love to you all.

January 12, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Another letter came from you on Wednesday, forwarded from Crowborough and dated Novem-

ber 17th. It makes me think that they will all come eventually, and no matter when they come your letters are a joy to me, so that this delay only means that I am rolling up pleasures ahead. I sent word Wednesday to the battalion to hold my mail, so when I go back Sunday I expect to find some more.

The course is nearly over. To-morrow, I think, is the last day. I have learned a great deal, and the comfortable living was welcome. I wish I could give it to all the men who are standing by along the line. Sometimes I have thought that I was not doing enough, but the final fact is that we are here, ready to do or suffer anything necessary, and here we stay as long as it is a physical possibility, until the victory is won. In the end, it is man power that will overcome, and each individual furnishes all he can of that and adds his part of the collective will to conquer.

In your letter you speak of the war stretching out interminably? It does in a way seem so, and yet determined as the resistance has been, and skilful as the enemy's strategists are, there must be a limit to their powers. We will not know what that limit is until we come on it suddenly, like the breaking-point of a steel bar after it has been stretched. The Somme battle not only revealed an unexpected ability and determination to resist, on

the part of the enemy, but an unexpected power and determination on our part to break through the most impregnable defences, and to beat down the most stubborn resistance. Winter halted operations before either could be fully developed, so our power, our final power, is still unknown, but the next campaign should solve the enigma. Far-seeing Germany is not confident. There is no other possible meaning to her offer of peace. We are confident; our reply signifies that. Military science gives that feeling primary importance in successful warfare. I am confident because I have seen and know the feeling of the men. It is as if a great river must be bridged by building a causeway of human bodies to allow those that come after to cross in safety. It has been half-built already, thousands of men have thrown themselves in and formed a strong foundation, but it is still far below the water level. The bridge must be built, and we are ready and waiting for the order to advance.

Clouds are gathering on the horizon of the Central Empires. The Austrians and Hungarians are growing uneasy and need delicate handling, and now that affairs approach a crisis the veil is drawn aside and Germany is showing her teeth to the neutrals. Cardinal Mercier writes, if conditions in Belgium were known and believed, every civilized man would take up arms. They are n't believed,

but Holland, Switzerland, and Denmark will believe if they are invaded. The United States will believe something if her European commerce is blockaded. The Spanish Government is brushing away the mental cobwebs. I think we, you and father and all, may face this new year with a happy confidence in the future, with the knowledge that all of us out here, and you over there, are determined to storm through the evil and right this terrible wrong. We have heard the cry of anguish and are answering it. It may be that God does not require my body for this causeway, but if that is his choice, we are ready and willing to give, and that way is the road to victory.

I feel as though I had been giving away a little to a heroic style of writing, but you know that I do not mean it that way. I know things are hard for you and I want to let you know that it is n't in vain that there is a definite goal you are fighting to reach, and are going to reach. I want you to feel the strength that comes to a fighter who knows that he will win.

Dearest love to you and father.

January 17, 1917

Dearest Mother :

We are out of the trenches again for our rest in billets. I was only in for two days after returning

from the training school, and they were very quiet. Your letter which I have been waiting for so very long is come. It was written after receiving mine from London when I was getting my kit; and just now come the letter you wrote on December 5th, when you received my cable, and also one dated December 29th, telling me that you had received my Christmas cable and the little French Christmas cards. It was a great joy having all your news of Christmas, and to think of your dressing the church and thinking of me while you were doing it, and then going to the six o'clock mass early Christmas morning, and your Christmas dinner with the little tree and my picture underneath. It all brings home back to me so.

You say I have never been in 2510, and yet I feel as though I have been there. I know just how it looks. I know the street and the neighborhood, and I know all the dear old furniture and the inside atmosphere of our home, which never changes, — our Lares and Penates, — and I picture you and father there at the two ends of our round table. It was a dear memory and knowledge. If I just shut my eyes I can hear you talking. I can never know a table which so utterly satisfies my mind and soul as my own home, and now that I have gone so far away and seen other countries and known that experience of facing death in another land, I have

fulfilled the tearing desire of seeking life away from home. L. E., when I tried to explain to him why I could n't be happy in Philadelphia just going ahead, said it was the usual thing, and that an engineer was never any good until he had given rein to the wandering spirit and allowed it to run out. He said that the time would come when it would go away, and I know that it has now. If I do not finish my work here, there is no telling where I may finally be called, but in any case I will be happy to settle, and if it should be at home, I will be very happy there.

I know that having my letter was a comfort to you, as you finished the work of dressing the church. I am so glad you all like the French cards. I thought they were lovely, and specially the soldiers worshipping. There was a very sweet little French girl in the shop where I bought them who spoke very good English, which she said she learned at school. She spent about an hour hunting cards for me, and was very interested in Billy and Margy and the cards and little books I found for them. In the end I gave her a franc, and she did n't want to take it until I said, "Pour Noël"; then she was full of smiles and said, "Merci bien, monsieur."

To-night, father's letter of congratulation, written when he received my cable, came too, both on

the same day, yours and his. And now I come to your Christmas parcel; that came too, and to-night at supper we had the little Christmas tree on the table with the candles lighted, and every one admired it. I loved everything in the parcel; the little towel and cold cream soap were so exactly the sort of thing I liked, the outside world touch, — and your Christmas crullers, they were delicious! One of my fellow subalterns in D Company, one of the nicest little chaps you ever knew, said to tell you that they were the best things he ever tasted. I told him he ought to see them when they were just baked. And the dates, and fruit-cake, and crackers were delicious. I loved it all, and the thought that you and father had been thinking of me, and I loved the card in your last letter, the Belgian Madonna, and the little card that brought "Merrie Christmas over land and sea," which a boy was selling "to help his mother." It was a dear little appeal.

It is getting late, so I will stop for a while, but I have much more to tell you to-morrow.

Dearest love to father.

January 18, 1917

Dear Father:

Your letter of December 6th, saying that you have received my cable, and your last, December 27th,

are both here. From now on I think that my mail will come regularly. I am glad you like the gloves. They were just a remembrance. I spent an hour on Regent Street, my last afternoon in London. It was crowded with Christmas shoppers, and the bright stores were very attractive in contrast to the darkened streets. The shop where I got the gloves was full of fascinating things of leather.

London seems a long way off now. We are out on another short rest in billets, and this time in huts, but quite comfortable ones. After finishing at the school, I went back into the trenches for two days, and then came out with the company. We put up for two nights in the upstairs of a town hall. Most of the window panes were out, so it was rather bleak and chilly. The mayor lived in an adjoining house and had a warm living room, with a stove in it, so the captain and I and one of the other D Company subs paid him a visit. He is a very pleasant and hospitable old chap, and his wife and daughter were pleasant too, and we spent the better part of the evening there, talking broken French. His wife made coffee, and he brought out the Cognac bottle and added a little sparkle to it. It was very good. He showed us the picture of his son, who is an officer in the French artillery, and a fine-looking chap with a full beard.

To-day we moved to our present location, and it

is possible that we will make another move before we go into the line again. The military situation is in the portentous stage. I wish I could discuss things more with you, but even this allusion is forbidden. You are really in a much better position to know and follow developments than I am, and form your own conclusions. We can only hope and pray for a speedy victory. I think that the Allies' terms were the reasonable and just outcome of what has happened, but whether we can gain them all is still uncertain. The United States is really acting as an intelligent outsider in that it has offered a means for the belligerents, or rather the Allies, to make a definite statement of terms without attempting useless negotiations. It is a day of momentous happenings, but I hope it will come to an end before many more months, the fighting part of it anyway, and the civilian suffering which the fighting is causing. Still, we must win a victory, or the people in Europe will suffer interminably.

Dearest love to you and mother.

January 20, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

We are still in billets; that is, out of the trenches, but I do not know for how many days. We moved from the Mairie, where I wrote you last Wednesday, and now we are in a hut camp. It is very com-

fortable, especially our quarters. We have beds and a very hot stove. It is a little too hot for me. The ground is covered with snow and there is a brisk snap to the air. To-day has been beautiful. We are rather at loose ends just now, on the eve of a reorganization, so there are no parades or regular work. This afternoon I hope to be able to arrange a bathing parade to a near-by village, where there are some baths. Charles H.'s company headquarters are in this place, but he is in the line just now. I called him up on the telephone and had a little talk with him.

I know how much you are with me in your heart and thought all the time, and it is strength and comfort for me to know that you are going ahead with your work, just as steadily as we all must. President Wilson's note gave the belligerents a chance to exchange views without entering into negotiation relations; that is exactly what the Allies wanted and what Germany did not want, and there is no question who came out on top in the exchange of opinions. Germany now has our official word as to what we are fighting for, and how little we expect an early or easy settlement. The German people, too, ought to have a more sober and thorough realization of actual conditions. There is no doubt that the United States will be able to play an important part in future events.

You were asking me about things to send. It is the little toilet things I need, mainly tooth brush and paste; about once every two months, though, is often enough for the former. Just at present I need a hair brush and comb, not two brushes, just one small one, the smaller the better; and, if you can, make a little bag to hold it. I have two bath towels and two or three little face towels you have sent, but I would like one of those little rubber sponges, and handkerchiefs, and an occasional pair of socks are always most welcome. Your friend, Mrs. H., sent me a lovely knitted scarf, which I must acknowledge.

It is time for me to go off and try to arrange for the baths, so I will stop for a while. Dearest love to you and father and Susan.

January 23, 1917

Dear Father:

Your letters of December 20th and 22d came this week, and I had that of the 29th more than a week ago. I hope that my letters are beginning to come through fairly regularly now, though we cannot expect too much under the circumstances. It must have taken a long time to get the first ones from France.

What do you think of this new raider? The Germans are very consistent with their high sea

offensive, and we cannot underestimate the seriousness of the situation. The raider and submarine are Germany's most formidable weapons, and greatly increase the power of resistance. Everything is well with me.

We are back in support, but instead of being in the trenches are billeted in a ruined, or semi-ruined, village just behind, and as usual have fixed things up comfortably. There was a stove in very good condition in the room in which we have taken our quarters, and it serves the double purpose of keeping us warm and cooking our meals. The engineers built us a table and some benches and bunks for furniture. It is still cold and clear, and the snow is still on the ground, which makes things very pretty and not at all warlike.

When you said that bringing the Kaiser to his knees is the only way out, I think you summed up the whole situation. As George Ade would put it, you said a "mouthful." But there is a tremendous task ahead of us. Your three "North Americans" arrived this evening, with their editorials on President Wilson's note. I enjoyed them very much, and they seemed to sum up the situation. There is no question but that Germany will launch forth her U-boat warfare at the first good opportunity, and then the United States will either be involved or sit still and suffer a virtual blockade. If only our far-

seeing statesmen would understand how they could secure their own safety, as well as that of Europe and the world, by closing in and taking the bull by the horns and helping us to wipe out this menace to the world!

It is late, and I must take a working party into the trenches early to-morrow morning, so I must stop.

Very much love to you both.

January 24, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter of December 20th came the other night, although I had one dated the 24th last week. The last was written in the Harrisburg State House. I remember the capitol and the gray squirrels in the park very well.

The cold weather is still with us, and the snow has not melted since it came down a week ago. The country is very beautiful. It stretches away from here very smoothly, and one can see several villages and the tree-bordered roads. Everything sparkles in the sunshine, and one can hardly believe the constant rumble and roar of guns, far away and close at hand. This little village has been shelled heavily in its history, but a large proportion of it is still in good condition and one can easily imagine what it must be like in peace time.

It all centres about the little church, which faces a big, open park. There is a great, jagged hole torn out of one side of the steeple, a familiar sight over here. Then there are the usual half-dozen or so big houses, with spacious grounds surrounded with high walls of stone or brick.

France in peace time must be lovely, but now in these towns that I see, many of the houses are ruined, and those that are n't are dilapidated and in bad repair. Houses that are uninhabited are dismal looking enough, but a village in that condition is intensely so. This special one has been taken over by troops for billeting purposes, so it is clean and neat, but homeless. We are quartered in the kitchen, living room, of a little cottage in quite good repair. There was one of those French stoves in it, which keep us warm and cook our meals and the engineers built us bunks, benches, and a table. There is a crucifix on the wall, as is invariable in French cottages, and a big composition statue of the Virgin, about three feet high, on a pedestal. It is very pretty, and one of the batmen washed it with a rag and water.

I know how your mind flashes out its wireless messages to me, and you may be sure that mine responds to it. I always think of you especially in the most trying times, and you always seem near to me. Pray that I will have strength and cour-

age when my testing time comes. Dearest mother, you are one of the blessed islands in a world that seems a shifting, uncertain sea. Love to father and Sue. Good-night, dear.

January 28, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your long letter, started on New Year's morning, came to me day before yesterday, and was full of comfort and strength. I thought the statement by the Churchmen in the "North American" was splendid, and almost voiced the Allies' thought in prosecuting the war to a finish, so that in future any nation which contemplates breaking treaties and international laws will hesitate to call up the indignation and resistance of all nations. I also received your copy of the programme of the meeting of the Academy of Music to protest against the deportation of the Belgians. The list of names seems very important and representative, and such resolutions as the meeting passed should have weight at Washington. By now you have the Allies' reply to the President's note and Mr. Balfour's further message. Both, I think, were very clear and good. There is nothing for us to do, but wait the event of our offensive, and pray that we may succeed in our effort. For me, you must pray for strength and courage to do my duty.

You know by now that Charlie H. has been wounded. I did not know until yesterday morning, when I went to his headquarters to try to locate him. They told me he was at a clearing station about six miles away, and so yesterday afternoon I walked to it and saw him. He looked very pale and weak, but they say he is going to pull through all right. He expected to be sent to England to-day, and I do hope he was, and will arrive there very shortly. His poor wife and mother must have suffered great anxiety, but now I believe they have relief and comfort in store for them. Charles's wound is serious, and it will be a long, long time before he is in shape again. What a mercy that his wife is where she can be with him in his sickness.

You were right about my experience at the base being only a momentary prosperity. There is no lack of opportunity for service of every kind, and it is entirely up to the individual how much he does. I am afraid that I might have made more use of myself up to the present, but I am trying to do my best. It takes a big man to be worthy of stars. We have been in billets now for two weeks, and to-morrow we expect to go back into the line for a short tour. Naturally, just at present there is some uncertainty about things. The weather still stays very cold and the snow is frozen

hard on the ground. I was talking to a Frenchman who gave me a lift in his cart on my way back from seeing Charlie H. at the hospital, and he told me that it was only cold here, this way, every fourth year. So far as the trenches are concerned it improves conditions, for the sides are stiff and the mud dried up.

My company commander is in the hospital in the same ward that Charlie H. is, with the "grippe." He just sent me word by his groom that Charlie is still there, and not likely to be moved for several days. More anxious waiting for them all, I am afraid.

Well, dearest, it is getting near the time for the mail to go out, so I had better close. As always I am in splendid health and of good heart, only anxious for the time to come when I can do my utmost for this cause we have so much at heart. May God bless my desire to be worthy, with the power to act. Surely it is his will that I am serving here with the Allies. Much love to father. I have his French dictionary. Good-night, dear heart.

January 31, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am writing this in a front-line dug-out. This is our third day in the line and we have three more to go, I think, possibly a few more. It has

been quite cold and the ground is still covered with snow. Last night it snowed quite a lot more. It is a very pretty picture, and a new one to me to see the trenches in this condition. The nights just now are very bright with moonlight, and one gets to like going through the trenches and out in the saps. So far things have been very quiet. Last night was especially so; this morning I was on duty at six o'clock, just as day was breaking, and it was the most beautiful rosy dawn. The guns had been quiet for an hour or two, and some sweet noted birds were fluttering around. Things of that sort bring home the realization of the peacefulness of peace.

It is hard for me to feel justified in deliberate hostile planning, and yet one cannot help doing it. I must remember that though perhaps these men desire peace as greatly as any one, yet they are the tools of those who have destroyed peace, and we can only gain our end by continually harassing and destroying them, and wearing down their morale. It is a grim business, and I hope it will come to an end before many months. What everything really hinges on is a concentrated offensive, and I hope that it may not be long in coming. I have not seen a paper now since last Saturday, and one is quite isolated here, so I do not know what developments may have taken place on other

fronts; there are always rumors circulating. Time passes quickly enough, but one longs for the day of decision to come. However, it is not for me, who have been here but a little more than a month, to be impatient, when some have been here for two years.

Dearest mother, good-bye for a while. Dearest love to father.

February 3, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Day before yesterday I received two letters from you, January 8th and 12th, and two of the same date from father. My mail is coming very satisfactorily now, and I have letters in two or three mails from you each week. You had received my first two letters from the trenches when I was just breaking in again. It was a little hard for me, and my letters must have shown it, but now I am as good as ever. My spirits are of the best, and I am quite content to live in the present and "carry on" with my duty in the best way that I know how. We are still in the front line and probably have a day or two more.

Your description of the meeting in the Academy of Music is very inspiring. If popular feeling is really so strong, it should lead to action, but the mills of the gods are very slow. I think most

English people feel that their government is doing its best to carry out their wishes just now. Any one who can see no threat to the U.S. in the avowed submarine intentions of Germany must be blind. Why wait till the crash comes before acting?

I am glad that Billy likes his boy scout suit. It was n't a very elaborate one, but I do not think one more so would have pleased him more. As I remember my "little boy days" the hat was the main feature of any outfit, and such other details as a sword or a belt were more than sufficient accompaniments. Next Christmas he shall have some regulation things, and when he is eight he must be a "tenderfoot." I think it is a splendid thing.

There cannot be a man out here who feels more content about home than I. You and father have made it so clear that my duty to you is not neglected by my being here. I must stop for a while now and censor some of the men's letters, so that they will catch this mail. Dearest love to you both.

February 7, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter of January 19th came day before yesterday. I do not know that the mails are running very often now, but your letters come two or three

times a week and give me great joy. I am glad you like the French picture. I really did not think it would amount to anything, but just wanted to give you an idea of the uniform. I was n't able to find much of a photographer, but I am glad he managed to make a picture that pleased you.

We came out of the front line, where we had been for seven days, yesterday, and in all that time I had n't seen a newspaper. You can imagine my feelings on reading of Germany's U-boat note and the crisis in the United States. Then yesterday we learned that Bernstorff and his colleagues had been given their passports and Gerard recalled, so in the twinkling of an eye, the thing we have been longing for so long has happened. Now, we can breathe freely and hold our heads up. I remember saying in a letter to you last week that there was no doubt about the menace to the United States in the new submarine policy. To-day it seems as though war was inevitable. I can imagine how excitement must run high at home, and the crowds watching the bulletin boards. I know the people want the President to act quickly to protect us against external and internal attacks, and I think that he will do it. We can never submit to the weekly trip to Falmouth which Germany has instructed us to make, and there is only one other alternative; the Central Empires are tak-

ing their last desperate chance and are determined to go through with it. This great time is what you have foreseen for the last two years. We could not keep out and go free. There is suffering and troublous times ahead for all of us. The main thing is to act quickly, and not allow Germany to strike first.

Our papers are a day late, but I am impatient for to-morrow. I long to hear that we have declared war and will send an army to France. It will mean suffering, but will hasten the end and will bring peace to the world sooner. It is strange to think of all the excitement and tense feeling at home, and to sit here not very far back of the line, in all the busy action and sounds that tell of the Allied determination to prosecute the matter to the finish. I did not realize before what a tremendous stimulus there is in the thought that one is doing this for one's own country. If by any chance we do have an army here, and it is possible for me to transfer to it, I surely will. That is a wonderful thought, to be fighting under the American flag.

I have been attending a special "two-day" course on tactics these last two days, so that I have n't written, my time was so full. It is still intensely cold and the snow unmelted. The experience of the trenches under such exceptional winter conditions was worth having.

Well, dear mother, I must stop now; it is very late. Dearest love to you and father. Good-night.

February 9, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

I have letters from you dated January 5th, 8th, 12th, and 19th. My letters are coming with great regularity and frequency now. I am wondering if the U-boats will manage to hold the mail up. I can hardly wait for the paper every morning, to see what further has been developed in the American situation. It is too bad that the German crews were permitted to disable their ships, for they would prove valuable for transport and labor purposes. I hope that the United States will not have to learn from bitter experience the necessity of the internment of enemy subjects in case war is declared. Undoubtedly there will be much internal trouble and plotting, but nothing, I think, that cannot be handled by our police and regular forces. Last summer's mobilization and training camps should stand us in good stead now.

You are right about the C.M.R.'s, they have had a very eventful history in France. My company commander is one of the very few original battalion officers left, and I have already told you how marvellously he escaped at the Somme.

The weather is still very cold and the snow has shown no sign of going away. I keep well and we always manage to fix up very comfortably. We have our cook and servants and run a company mess, which is very good and costs less than two francs a day, which you must admit isn't much. My combination bed-roll and valise is great. Of course it can't be taken into the line, but when we are out it always assures us a warm, comfortable sleep. I wish all the men had them.

This fine weather brings the aeroplanes in swarms, and there is usually a fight or shelling going on. I can hear our guns shelling a German plane now. The Archies are easily distinguishable from other artillery. This morning they brought one down, but I was a minute too late to see it. I think I will go out and have a look now. He got away from here, but other batteries in the distance are picking him up. The sky is dotted with tiny white clouds from the shell-bursts.

I wish I could sit down and write you fully of all the happenings over here, but we must wait till "après la guerre." Dearest love to you all.

February 14, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Here I am in a little French village, quite a distance back of the line. The battalion is here for a

short period of training. We all of us, officers and men, have quite comfortable billets, and it is a pleasure to get back to training again, much as that is hated in England. The men take a big interest in physical training and drill after the enforced slackness of trench life. They have a chance to get cleaned up and put their clothes in a decent condition again, and to get rid of their colds and sickness. We officers live in farmhouses, and have beds with white sheets on them. You can imagine the luxury of that. French beds are made of mattresses about two feet thick, so you see it is quite a change from floors.

The people here are very friendly, and we hold long conversations with them. Many are refugees from occupied territory, and all have husbands or sons at the front. The husband of the woman who is my landlady has been a prisoner of war since October, 1914. He writes to her once a week, and she manages to send him food; so far, she says, he is in good health. The children in the different houses are especially attractive. I have just been playing with some, and a doll named "Augusta," which I dressed in various costumes, much to their delight. They were also much amused at my French, I think. I find father's lexicon a great help.

We came here by a two-days' march, and the men stood it remarkably well, when one considers

that we have had nothing of the kind for a long time. We stopped over night in the town half way along, and I ran into one of my old friends, B. S. from Toronto. He is sergeant major of a column of mechanical transport; that is, big motor trucks that carry supplies and ammunition. He was dumbfounded at seeing me, for he did n't know that I was out here. He looked, and was, the same as ever, and we spent the evening together. Did I tell you that one of the old rodmen was sergeant major of one of the companies of my battalion? It seemed funny to see him out here, as he was my companion on a great many surveys in the Toronto terminals.

It was interesting to march through this district of France and see the villages and people. I always think what a lovely country it must be in peace time, and what a pleasure it would be to travel peacefully here. Perhaps one day we can, together. The weather is warmer, very bright and sunshiny, and the houses where we are on the outskirts of the town, with the fields adjoining us, remind me of Mount Holly at this time of year. I went to the hospital where Charlie H. was just before we came away, and found that he was much better and had been sent down to the base, so I hope by now his people are very much reassured and that he will soon be in England.

The situation between Germany and the United

States remains the same, but one expects to hear of the break daily. There seem to be rumors that the Germans' bluff is called and that they will not dare to sink a United States ship, but I have my doubts about that. I feel sure that things will come to a head in a very short time, and that very likely the United States will not only declare war, but send an army to France; the sooner the better, for we must win a definite military victory, and need all possible strength. The greater and stronger the army, the sooner the war will be ended and the less the suffering entailed. We hear daily of minor operations on the Somme, and all of them spell small gains, but it amounts to little more than jockeying for a starting-post. When the great effort comes it will be the most tremendous crash in history. I hope it will be soon, for further delay only means further misery. One hates to think of the condition of people in occupied territory and the prisoners of war, now that the surveillance and protection of the United States have been withdrawn.

Mail has been held up lately, and I wonder if the U-boat war has anything to do with it. I feel sure that some of my mail was on the California. I suppose my letters to you will be held up too. Well, dear heart, we must make the best of things. I write often, so some of my letters should get through. Dearest love to you and father.

February 21, 1917
Ash Wednesday

DEAREST MOTHER:

Here we are at the beginning of another Lent, although it is not quite a year since the first time that I came to France. This week I have had your long letter of January 26th, — one from father, and the crucifix. It is just the same as the first, and I am glad to have it again pinned inside of my breast pocket. Thank you for having it fixed and sent so quickly. Father's cable, dated February 9th, reached me a few days later. I must send you one before we leave here. We are still in the "rest," and have, I think, about a week more.

I have told you about the village and how friendly all the people are. I have long conversations with the madame of my billet. She has some very cunning little children — girls. I think I told you that her husband is a prisoner of war. When I go away, I will give her something to send him. Then there is Madame Duployez, who with her mother and father and little son are refugees from Lens. C., another D Company officer, and I often call on her, and she is delighted to see us. She is very bright and gay, and her mother is very nice too, they always give us "café noir." Her husband has been in the army from the start, and through all the big engagements. He was due home on a

seven-days' leave a few days ago, but the day he was expected, she had a letter saying that leave was cancelled, owing to the German offensive in Champagne; that is his area.

Our papers are not coming at all well now, and we have n't seen one since Saturday, so I do not know how the Germans have progressed, or whether it was only a minor operation. In any event, it is not likely to affect general progress on our part. There seems to be a pause in the U-boat campaign as far as neutrals are concerned, but I still think that we cannot help becoming involved. If Germany's blockade is to be effective it must debar neutral trade. They say that the British war loan has been a tremendous success, so that should help matters. We go on steadily here with our training every day. It has been growing warmer and the ground is muddy again, but that does not amount to anything out here.

My letters do not seem to have any news in them, because there is so much repressed that I long to tell you. You must know how much I think of you, and long that you could be spared all this anxiety; and yet I know that you rejoice to bear that part in the victory that must be won. Dearest mother, you will never know how much I owe to you for strength, and courage, and inspiration to carry me through this.

I am sitting here now in my room writing at a big round-fronted table, by the light of two candles. My books and various possessions are on the table, and it reminds me in a way of my Toronto table. My high bed, with its white sheet and counterpane and white pillow, is at my right side, and on the left a casement window which opens into the barnyard. The door is right behind me and opens into the kitchen, and on both sides of it I have hooks to hang my clothes on. A little while ago the family were all in there by the stove, the children chatting away, but now they are in bed. Some time ago, too, madame gave a soft "Bon soir, monsieur," and went into her part of the house, which is on the opposite side of the kitchen.

I love the politeness of the French people and children, the infinite compliment they are able to express in their "monsieur" without the slightest trace of servility. Say "Hello" to the veriest ragamuffin, and you will always receive a polite "Bon jour, monsieur." Madame Duployez, who does my washing beautifully, and whose husband in civilian life is a coal miner, entertains me in her kitchen and living-room as nicely as I have ever been entertained, and I always enjoy my visits there. If you receive a letter in French, you must answer it in the same language.

It is very late. I must write oftener. Forgive the apparent dryness of this. Dearest mother, you know how much love and thought I have for you always. Much love to father.

February 24, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

We are nearing the end of our second week here, and it is nearly time for us to go back again. I waited until a day or two ago to reply to your cable. Every time that I write now I wonder whether or not my letter will get across to you. Day by day we watch the papers for the news that the United States has declared war, but every day it seems to be the same: preparations going on, but nothing definite decided. The two steamers — Orleans and Rochester — that were sent out as test cases have not yet been heard from. The other boats are delaying their sailings until the Government decides whether or not they must be armed. I suppose all that means a big mail delay, and probably in the future, until we get things more straightened out, there will be many delays, and we must content ourselves with letters at longer intervals.

We have devoted our time here to serious training, and I think that all the men are in better shape than they have been for a long time. The com-

fortable living conditions and freedom from the mental strain of the line has done wonders. After being in the trenches, time in a place of this sort passes very quickly. The comfortable bed with sheets on it proved tremendously attractive in the early evening at first, and then we came to know several of the families and visited them. It is very amusing to talk French, and I am getting along quite well with the pronunciation, but my vocabulary still leaves much to be desired. Your dictionary is invaluable. To-morrow afternoon one of my best friends, Madame Duployez, is going to make waffles for me, so I have a treat in store.

One of the subs has a mandolin, which he plays very well, and we have borrowing privileges of a phonograph with some very good records, so on occasions a pleasant evening can be had. There is a fairly large town not far away, and we went there and had a picture taken of the D Company officers, and I had a separate one taken, which I hope will find their way to you some time. I won't risk them on one ship. I was very glad to hear that you had seen the Somme pictures. I saw them last summer at Folkestone, and thought them splendid. The man who took them did so at as much risk as the holding soldier, and that is very great. I hope that they did not censor any part of them.

I am keeping splendidly well, and this rest has gotten me into very good shape, so that I feel fit for anything. We have a summer of hard work ahead of us, but, God willing, we will accomplish the task that is set. I only hope that Mr. Roosevelt will get over here with his men in time to give us a hand. More and more the bigger men are beginning to see things in their true light. A day or two ago the paper published some very pungent truths spoken by Elihu Root.

It is late, so I must stop. My thoughts are always turning to home and the dear people who are thinking and praying for me. All I ask is that my actions here may be worthy of the ideals you have taught me. Dearest love to mother and to you.

February 25, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

This, I think, is our last Sunday in "rest," and it has been a beautiful day. Chilly at first, but then toward noon the sun came out brightly, and it grew warm and springlike. We had church service in the open, and then at eleven, the Holy Communion in the village school-house; a simple, comfortable service.

One of the chief regrets of the battalion is that Captain H. has been transferred to the Divisional

Artillery. This afternoon I took a walk with C., one of D Company lieutenants, and we called on Madame Duployez. She made waffles — "gaufres" — for us, as she had promised. Her husband's leave has been postponed again.

We are still working hard at our training, and expect to remain here several days more. With the first of March that great spring we have been waiting for will be well on the way, and God grant success to our arms when we can finally attack. We must drive the Germans back and overwhelm them; that is the only thing that can bring an end to all this terrible suffering and shadow that has fallen on the world, and that must be our strength when we go into it.

Yesterday's papers told of Lloyd George's great speech and the drastic restrictions to be put on the imports, and its immediate acceptance gives one confidence in the sincerity and determination of the English people to do everything and make every sacrifice to win. The men who have been striving and wrestling with the spirit of the nation have won out in their great battle, and now we must do the very best that we can to win ours. Every day I look for the great news from the United States, but it has not come yet. Still I believe that every day brings it nearer. The news that Colonel Roosevelt has already laid plans for a speedy mobilization

of an army of offence is very welcome, and so is it that Root and others are clear as to our duty in regard to international integrity and respect of treaties. I know that you are burning with the delay of our own action, and it is a hard burden to bear, but we must be patient, for there is much enduring ahead to be done. Our mail will be delayed and perhaps some lost, but we will suffer that too. "C'est la guerre," and this is our war, which we are glad to endure for what its victory will mean.

It is late again, so I will go to bed. Dearest love for all.

March 2, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter of February 2d is here, written after Germany's famous declaration, and to-day's paper, or rather yesterday's, gives us news of a tremendous agitation in the United States over the sinking of the Laconia, and says that war was only a matter of forty-eight hours. I hope so. I do not see how we can ignore the overt act upon which the President has set such store. Von Hollweg's speech in the Reichstag only aggravates the offence. We eagerly wait the news.

There has been splendid report of progress on the Ancre. The Germans are making a speedy

retirement, and many villages are falling into our hands which were expected to cost dearly. There is a tendency to consider it a part of the German plan to shorten their front, but to do that effectively it will be necessary to retire on an extensive scale, and the wisdom of that is doubtful. There is great news of British success against the Turks in Mesopotamia. We can only hope and pray that the tide is on the turn. If only we can pierce that line somewhere in its length!

As you can see, we are still in our training place. The length of our stay was increased for some reason, and so we have had a chance to train to a much greater degree of efficiency, and are much better for our stay here. The back of the winter is broken, and though March is an unpleasant month, each day that goes by brings us nearer to an end of the suffering from cold, or rather discomfort; there has been really not much suffering on this point. Especially it brings us nearer to that happy time when the mud will get dry again. The weather here has been very lovely for the most part, and we are lucky to have had it so. It has been a pleasure to work in these pleasant sunny fields, and the people of the village are still friendly and hospitable, so the time goes quickly.

Your letter was another of those wonderful inspirations and encouragements. Your praying for

victory breathes the fighting spirit which we will all need so badly before long. Your description of the pilgrimage of prayer is fine. It is a splendid and much needed thing. One of our gains from this war is the realization we have of the need of it all.

A heavy United States mail is reported lost on the Laconia, and more than likely there were letters for me in it. I cannot think that the Government will block foreign mail, but it may be necessary to restrict sailings. Father's telegram prepared me to expect delays. This is Saturday afternoon, and a half holiday. My platoon has asked me to play on their soccer team against another platoon, and it is time for me to go now, so I will come back to finish.

I have finished the soccer game, which was good fun, and then had my weekly hot bath at Madame Duployez' and a change into clean clothes. Madame fills a wash-tub — the ordinary wooden variety — with hot water, and then places a bucket of cold water beside it. I temper the bath, and then, when I have finished, pour the rest of the cold water over me as a "douche." It is an excellent way to bathe. She washes my clothes, and does them beautifully. Her husband has finally returned for his leave, and instead of seven days, he has a month in which to work in the mines, for the Government is

greatly in need of coal. He is a doughty "poilu" and very interesting to talk to, for he has been through all the big campaigns, including Verdun.

After my bath, I went to dinner and found a letter from J. H. from the hospital in Boulogne where C. is. She was telegraphed for when he arrived there, because he had another hard pull, I suppose. Anyway, now she is with him and feels cheered by his progress, and thankful to have him back, away from the front. He has surely done his share, and I hope he has finished with all the hardships. I hope, too, that his mother can soon be relieved of her anxious suffering.

To-morrow is Sunday and there is to be an early service in the school-house at eight. I thought last Sunday would be the last here, but I am sure this will be, though there may still be several days. We have had a long rest and are in good condition to return to our work. Dearest mother, my heart is always turning to you and praying that you may have grace to endure the trials, and that we may soon be together again.

March 8, 1917

Dearest Mother:

Only a few days more now before we go back into the line. The village and our billets have become very homelike, and the constant family gathering

of the seven of us in the company mess has brought us very close together. The second winter has set in, but I do not think it will be a long one. It is quite cold morning and evening, and there was quite a blizzard of snow this morning. To-day is the anniversary of my landing in France. The year has made a big difference; if I could have looked ahead and known at the end of that time I would be an officer, I would have been even more full of good spirits and cheer than I was.

Two impressions which I will never forget were my first glimpse of the English coast and my first of the French. In both cases we landed after nightfall and had to wait until morning for our first impression, and both absolutely satisfied me. There was no sense of disappointment in the thing I had looked forward to for many years.

I have grown quite accustomed to the daily life of a French village, mostly farmers and coal miners. The women do very hard farm-work, ploughing and cultivating in the fields and threshing and taking care of the stock in the barns. Nearly every afternoon we go to call on Madame Duployez (or Capron; her father's name is Duployez, her husband's Capron) for a half-hour or so before dinner, and she always has black coffee, which I must confess I am not overfond of; it is very bitter. It is a pleasant relaxation to talk French, and they

are used to my variety, so have no difficulty in understanding me.

We are all looking forward to the opening of a new campaign with confidence and hope. It is bound to cost dear, but I think all of us are ready to pay anything asked.

Affairs in the United States seem to become more complicated every day. The beginning of the week brought the news of the German plot with Mexico and Japan, almost a direct corroboration of our expectations and thoughts months and months ago. This comes on top of a fresh Lusitania crime and Von Hollweg's reiteration of Germany's will to continue high-sea piracy and lying accusations against the good faith of the United States Government, and on top of the whole thing comes a newspaper yesterday, telling us that eleven senators were able to block the bill to arm merchantmen. Some American newspaper comments termed the action "treason." It most certainly was that, and the perpetrators should be punished for that very crime, but of course they won't be. I know how the whole thing goads you and father and the rest of the Americans who are loyal to their country and whose sun does not rise and set for their own personal comfort and pleasure.

The British advance on the Somme is encouraging, and if the German retirement is a strategi-

cal attempt to change the method of warfare from straight trench work, we will welcome it. That is just what we are looking for. Apparently the Germans are still butting against the wall of Verdun.

Dearest love to you and father. I think of you always and am conscious of your prayers and help.

March 11, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

My letters to you lately have not been very frequent; as a matter of fact there has been little to write about, but a great deal to keep one busy in the matter of routine training work. Our rest and training period, owing to ulterior events, has extended for a much longer period than any one expected, but it has been taken advantage of by every one and we will be much better for it when we go back. I suppose this is really the first rest of the sort that this division has ever had.

For some reason the colonel has formed a conclusion that I am a bombing expert, and seems to be manœuvring toward making me an understudy to his bombing officer. Last week he took me away from the company for several days to experiment with rifle grenades, — i.e., find what range could be obtained with various lengths of rifle-barrels and rods, — and now he has sent me to the town where the divisional headquarters is

stationed, to stay with the commandant of the divisional school for two or three days and pick up all the knowledge I can about bombing. The whole thing is distasteful to me. I am not especially interested in bombs, and do not know any more, if as much, about them, as the average subaltern, and it is taking me away from the company on the eve of big things, when every day counts. But here I am with some bombing instructors who take very little interest in things and can teach me little or nothing that I do not know already, wasting very valuable time and not in a very pleasant frame of mind.

The weather has turned cold again, though nothing like what it was in January. At night, one is glad of all the covers one can get, but during the day it is fairly warm.

The papers give us continual good news of progress on the western front. The French have nullified the German stab in Champagne, the Turks at Bagdad are in a bad way, and the prospects there are exhilarating. The frank admission by the German Government of their plot to embroil Japan and Mexico with the United States, now unanswered except by bickering in the Senate as to the advisability of arming merchantmen, is an absurdity.

I hope that you and mother are keeping well

and as cheerful and as brave as can be. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are giving as much and enduring as much now, as you would if there were an American army in the field. In trying to do my duty to the utmost, it will be with the thought that you are behind me, urging and encouraging me to fight the enemy of our country and all people.

The whole tone of the army here is confident determination. We do not under-estimate the German power nor the difficulties that have to be overcome. We do not imagine that victory will come easily or in a short time, but we know the temper of the men, and their skill and abilities. We are willing to make the necessary sacrifices, and we know that the people at home are willing to make theirs. We have leaders, such as Lloyd George and Joffre, to pit against the Kaiser and Hindenburg, and four big devoted nations to pit against Germany and Austria. Perhaps that does not give us a heavy handicap, but certainly the English navy does.

Well, there is little more to say. I am in fine health; needless to say, with all this comfortable living, and my spirits are high. I am eagerly looking forward to the time when we cease to hold, and start to drive the Huns back to their own frontier. We must demonstrate to Hindenburg

that his army is not invincible. A great deal of love to you and mother. I think of you always.

March 13, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter of February 20th arrived two or three days ago, while I was away on my little grenade course. It seems to bring you very near, for it was written while I was here. The letter you sent Mrs. H. to forward has not arrived yet, but probably will soon. Now we have the news that President Wilson has issued orders for the merchant ships to be armed, without waiting for a new vote in the Senate. From now on, the mails should resume in a way their regularity, though of course they would not be very frequent.

I doubt if the neutrality myth can be maintained much longer. To-day we were cheered by the news that the British had occupied Bagdad, reversing the fall of Kut last summer. Let us hope that it is the beginning of a series of victories for the Allies. The food crisis seems to be coming everywhere. There will be a potato famine in England and France very soon. Coal is very scarce here, and I believe it will soon be confined entirely to war uses. The world is indeed becoming involved in the maelstrom, and America cannot possibly escape. The German influence in Mexico will probably lead to

another outburst down there. Meanwhile, as you say, "all will be well," and we can do our bit where we are.

Everything goes well with me. We are still here in the village, going ahead with the training, but the time for moving is very near. Last week's cold weather has given way to more softness and warmth. The hardship due to real cold weather is over for this winter, though no doubt there will be plenty of wet, chilly nights. Still, winter itself has gone, and one can always look ahead for a warm to-morrow.

I am just going on writing as though the mails were running regularly. Yesterday I had a lovely box from Toronto, handkerchiefs, socks, and letter paper. Father's letter of the 25th came too. Dearest love to you both.

March 16, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

Your letter of February 23d was waiting for me on my return to the battalion after the small bombing course. You had received my letters up to January 28th, which is pretty good, considering. We now have news that shipping is resumed and all liners have orders to fire on U-boats at sight, so that the mail should be nearly normal again. I do not think that the Germans will be able to disrupt

traffic seriously, though without doubt there will be conflicts, and war is sure to result shortly. China is now added to the enemies of the Central Powers. One by one all are dropping into line. We have fresh news of success on the Ancre every day, and the Bagdad affair is very gratifying. Good news from the East is a rare article. Our rest is over and we already have our schedule mapped out. It has been a very pleasant and at the same time valuable period for us. There is really no news that I can tell you. Everything seems to trespass on censor rulings. I am very well, and my morale is A1. A great deal of love to you and mother. You are always in my thoughts.

March 17, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

We are just about leaving our French home. We will have been here five weeks to-morrow, just twice and a half as long as we expected. The people have all been so nice and friendly, and we have been so comfortable and happy, that we are sorry to go. The little village and the surrounding fields where we have trained, the daily farm-work going on around us, has all grown very familiar. I have speaking acquaintance with lots of the people and children. On the other hand, we are glad to be going up the line again; that is our business over

here, and we want to have a part in sending good news back to the people at home. Every one is in good physical condition and rested.

Every day we have good news from the Ancre front. The German retirement is n't such a prearranged movement as they would like us to believe. One after another our artillery makes their positions untenable, and the infantry is always pushing ahead and hastening their retreat. It is interesting to follow the changing line on the map. I hope father has a good one. Bagdad is a valuable capture, especially from the moral point of view, and yesterday the paper reported that the cavalry had pushed forty miles beyond.

To-day is beautiful, a crisp, clear wind, and that liquid, golden sunshine that promises spring in a few more days. Dearest love, mother, and to father and to those at the rectory. There is so little to tell you, that I must write oftener. Think of me as very happy and content at being here this spring.

France, March 23, 1917

Dearest Mother :

Your letter of February 15th, forwarded by Mrs. H., reached me to-day, just about a week after that of the 20th which you posted in Philadelphia. The idiosyncrasies of present-day mail ! It is marvellous how it manages to get here at all. Your let-

ters are always so personal and full of love that it does n't matter, whether or not they arrive chronologically. It is too bad that the big Christmas parcel never arrived. I know how much love and care you put into it. Perhaps even now it will come some time. Occasionally letters and parcels travel around aimlessly and are side-tracked, and then find their way to their destination months later.

Very little news filters through nowadays, and we do not hear of things until two or three days after they have happened. Our last word was that the advance south of Arras by the French and British was still continuing, and we are full of hope that the success there and against Turkey also is keeping up. It is remarkable that the German army can stand up against such continuous and steady onslaughts as the Allied armies have been making for the last twelve months. One would expect its morale really to break even if that of the people at home does not. When one gets up to the guns and feels the intensity and determination of the bombardment, one can realize the point of fierceness this war has reached. The rage of a present-day battle is an unprecedented thing.

And America, my news of her is days late too. We only know that war is considered inevitable and that every preparation is being made to meet the issue. To-day's paper says that a special ses-

sion of Congress has been called for April 2d. Whether it will result in a declaration of war is uncertain, but I think that it will, for by that time there will be an aggregation of overt acts and public opinion will be insistent. The sooner the better, for although we have won a great victory there is still a great deal more to do, and we need help.

I hope the parcel that you sent from Quebec will arrive, for I know it will have the things that I want; not that I am really in need of anything, but it is nice to get in touch with home and have things you have had. We are having another spell of very cold weather, much the same as last March. I do not suppose we can count on any real warmth before the middle of April, and then it will come to stay. Meanwhile, it is clear and fairly dry, and that is what we need. Dearest love to you both.

March 24, 1917

DEAR FATHER:

The war is still going on in the same old way, only the warm weather seems considerably to quicken activities; not that the weather is specially warm; the last week has been very cold.

You have probably rejoiced with the rest of us at the big advances in the south. It is a good beginning for our offensive, but if it is true that we

will have to drive the Germans across their own frontier before they give in, there is a long way to go. Every one nowadays is indulging in optimistic hopes of a big, general retirement, back to a secondary line. As a time-gaining manœuvre it is certainly good, for it would take a long time to get our guns into position again, but aside from that it is hard to see any advantage. The voluntary relinquishment of so much hard-won territory is most certainly an admission of weakness, and I should not expect it to have a good moral effect on the people if they are at all inclined to be restless.

It is hard to know what the Russian revolution will accomplish, whether it will mean a new and immediate strengthening of the army, or a long and indefinite period of reorganization and consequent inaction. I am quite sure that Hindenburg is too much worried with affairs on our front to attempt to take advantage of the situation with a northward drive. The papers we have to-day, and yesterday, are full of the extra session of Congress about to be called and the possibility of the United States taking an actively offensive part in the war. I hope it will work that way. We certainly need all the help we can get, and the sooner the better.

Mail is a fairly scarce article these days, although yesterday there was a big one from Canada, after

none for a fortnight. I had three letters from Toronto and one from mother. My last letter from you was dated February 25th. One of my letters from Toronto told me that Olaf has a little son, so the war is not blowing everybody ill. Everything is well with me: good spirits, health, food, quarters, nothing that I need or could complain of. I hope that all goes well with you. A great deal of love to you and mother.

March 27, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letter postmarked March 7th arrived yesterday. That is very good time — nineteen days; and on it you had written, "Yours of February 14th just arrived," so that only took twenty days. Less than six weeks to do the return trip is a good record just now. Everything is going splendidly. I am in good health, good spirits, and feel full of energy.

Each day's paper gives us further assurance of big preparations and determination to enter the war by the United States. By now you must feel that you have a big and powerful party on your side, who are only too anxious to do everything that can be done to make amends for the past. The meeting at Madison Square Garden must have been great, and the New York "World's" cam-

paign to make a gift of $1,000,000,000 to France. It seems very little for us to do for a country that has suffered so in the name of Democracy, and who always helped us in our fights for the same thing. Her losses in this war have, for the most part, been our gain.

For the last week it has been very cold, and there has been much snow and sleet, but to-day it is warmer and very bright and sunny. Last year, April was half rain and half summer weather, so I suppose this year will be much the same. There will be many cold nights still, no doubt, but winter discomforts are practically over.

I am glad that you have the Toronto paper, for it keeps you in touch with all the news of the Canadian forces, and devotes more time and heart to the war than ours. In a way it must remind you of the way we used to get it every morning and look for news of the Pioneers. The times are certainly full enough of action and realities to give every one pause. Things happen every day that were entirely out of the ken of the last generation.

The Russian revolution is one of the greatest upheavals of political wrong in the world's history, and accomplished quickly and easily. My earliest thoughts of Russia always placed it in my mind as a mysterious, half-civilized place like China, full of secret societies, spies, and the mediæval

exile in Siberia. Now in three days the whole rotten secret core has been rooted out, and she takes her place beside other Christian countries, fighting for humanity and at the same time strangling the wrong in her own home. The old oligarchical rule that trusted to secrecy, mystery, superstition, underground darkness, for its power, seems to have had its day. More and more the Christian idea of fresh air and daylight is coming into the world. Vice flourishes in the dark, and secrecy is the enemy of honesty. I am sure that this war will end in a revolution of the Central empires and the overthrow of their system of tyrannical government. For that reason, if for no other, it is for the United States to give and do everything for our success.

Well, dearest mother, I must put this in the mail. My very dearest love to you and father. You are always in my heart and thoughts.

Palm Sunday, April 1, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

I have not had a chance to write much this week. We are just out of the line again, and comfortable in a good camp for a little while. The parcel with the toilet things sent from Quebec arrived safely a day or two ago, and they are all lovely.

The rubber-lined bag is exactly what I wanted to put my things in, and the sponge, brush and comb, toothbrush and paste are all things I wanted, and the little cakes of Daggett and Ramsdell's soap are lovely; just another of your dear parcels with the things you think of for me. Where did you get the pretty khaki-colored stuff for the bag?

I have n't had a letter from you since that of March 5th, but last night came the enclosure of the Raemakers cartoons and the little Japanese calendar. I am so glad you were able to see those pictures. I have seen a great many, but not half of those in the catalogue, and I thought them very wonderful and moving. The Foreword in the catalogue is right when it gives them a permanent place as witness to posterity of the outrages of this war. No wonder the German Government has placed a price on his head. I loved the little Japanese calendar and the description of the Leprosy Hospital. What a wonderful work it is, and what bravery it must take to face isolation and an incurable disease cheerfully! The little prayers opposite each month are appropriate to the life out here, and I will keep it as my pocket calendar.

Just now I have received two more letters from you, postmarked March 1st and March 4th, both of them dear and full of love. You spoke of the cable. I am glad it reached you and was reassur-

ing. We know that it takes very little time if we want to communicate any special news. I did not hurry in replying to yours, for I knew you would not be expecting it immediately. I think that I will send you word at intervals that way, and I will only send when I am sure the news will hold good for the time it takes for you to receive it; for instance, at the beginning of a rest. One letter enclosed a beautiful little violet card for peace, and the other the violet from the big bunch that you bought for me. I will keep them in my prayer-book.

You said that you were writing in the dark without knowing when or how the letters would reach me, so it should be reassuring to know that they have come through in good time. As for that Christmas parcel, I do not know what can have become of it. When I think of all your care and love in making and sending it, and the joy it would have been, it makes me heart-sick to think that it never came: the handkerchiefs with my name and all. There is no way that I can trace it. The Army Post-Office is working under tremendous pressure, and mistakes occur inevitably. D. S. sent me a parcel about then which never arrived, and she says that one was sent to me from St. Thomas's Church. I never had that either. A parcel from Aunt G. that should have taken a week took seven weeks. Apparently it

travelled around to a lot of different battalions, as did a letter from Toronto. Anyway, now I have all my toilet things, and they are lovely.

We are all waiting anxiously for the extra session of Congress and its action. Every one is sure that it will be a declaration of war or that war is going on. What a tremendous inertia has to be overcome before things can start. One of the D Company officers received the editorial page of two New York "Tribunes," and the editorials were splendid. It made one feel that America was sound at the core. In one of the columns was the account of an appeal, circulated by the "American Emergency Peace Federation," urging people to do everything in their power to tie things up at the Capitol, by keeping a stream of telegrams and letters flowing to the President and Congress petitioning peace. I think it was the most infamous thing that I ever read. On a par with that is the recent utterance that outrages three thousand miles away were no concern of ours. In spite of all, I am sure a very short time will find the United States openly at war, and then all the loyal people whose life is now unbearable, according to the New York "Tribune," will have their chance.

That was such a thought of yours, to let me give you the violets that you love. You know the joy it would be to me to be able to give them, so

you just made it possible. Your knowledge and acceptance of my love is my greatest happiness.

You ask me if I had heard from H. Not for about two weeks. You know she has been in a clearing station in Flanders, and I think is nearly worn out with the work. You know the drive of hospital work, but these military hospitals are more intense. They are full of terribly hard cases to handle, and the nearer one gets to the line the more tremendous the strain. A ward empties in the morning and is full up again by afternoon; at the clearing stations, only the very worst cases are kept. Men are sent on, that a city hospital would think it murder to move.

To-day our old padre, Captain H., came in to see us. That reminds me that Canon S. is very near here, and the day after to-morrow I am going over to see him.

There is much to be done and my letters do not seem frequent. This has stretched over two days, so now I am going to finish it, for it is very late and cold. My dearest love to father and to all. Dearest, dearest mother, good-night.

April 6, *Good Friday*

DEAR FATHER:

My letters to you have not been very frequent lately. We have been rushed steadily, and letters

to mother have been all that I can manage. Every one was delighted with the news in this morning's paper that the United States had declared war, and intends to enter into it whole-heartedly, with army and navy and in alliance with the Allies. It is wonderful to think of, and from now on I will feel that I am fighting under my own flag. Everything is going well out here, the weather is getting warmer and winter conditions are practically at an end. There is going to be plenty of rain and mud, but those are things we must always contend with. Good news comes in each day, and the German line is being forced steadily back by the British. It is only a matter of a week or so before the fall of Saint-Quentin, which is one of the nuclei of the Hindenburg line.

I am very well and full of good spirits and expectations, and now that the United States is at war, I am more glad than ever that I am here. I remember in the spring of 1914, when the first rumors of war with Mexico began to come through, I was wondering what my chances of being accepted as a private would be, rather dubious about my eyes. Later, when the first Canadian contingent left, and O. with them, I felt as if I had been robbed of something and I longed for a chance to enlist for my country as they had for theirs. Now I am right at the front, and with a commission, on

the very day my country declares war. It seems as though my greatest and most impossible earthly longing has been granted. I am going to try to be worthy of it, and when I am facing anything hard in the future, I will remember I am an American soldier.

I can understand what a relief it must be to you after all your distress to have it settled, and now every one can settle down to the work of preparation. If one can believe our papers they are going at it with a whole heart and no half measures.

There is no news that I can send you now, excepting to send you my love and assurance that I am doing and will do my best, and that I am always thinking of you and mother and your desire that I do my part. Very much love to you both.

April 7, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am going to start my Easter letter to you tonight and finish it in the morning. I had a wonderful mail the other day: four or five letters from you, dated February 24th (marked "damaged by seawater"), March 10th, 12th, and 16th. Besides those I have your letters of March 1st and 4th. The last letter had your beautiful Easter card, so your timing this time was just right.

I am rejoicing with you in the great decision of

the country to join the Allies. It has been a wonderful inspiration and encouragement to every one out here and a joy to me, and I know what a great relief and comfort it is to you after the long strain of waiting and suffering. Now, we are giving and fighting for our own flag and native country *who has found again her ideals*. I am looking forward to Easter with that happy thought in my heart and soul.

It is late now, so, dearest mother, I will say "Good-night."

Easter Morning

Happy Easter, dearest mother. I have been to the communion service in the Y.M.C.A. tent, and now have just finished my breakfast. It is a beautiful, sunshiny spring day, one of the loveliest we have had for weeks. After the service, the chaplain handed out copies of this poem. I am sending it to you as an Easter memento of the firing line. It is very wonderful, and I think the epitome of what one feels out here.

I am very well and happy just now, and we are all full of the inspiration and encouragement that this great new ally, the United States, and all the fine success of the French and British farther south, have given us. It is only a question of pushing steadily and determinedly ahead now, and we will

win. There are lots of strong men here, and lots more ready to come from England and America, so we go ahead with that thought in our hearts. I wish I could tell you more about things now, but perhaps that will come later. To-day I am in a comfortable wooden hut on a hillside, right in the centre of every kind of activity of a warlike nature. This section of country is entirely given over to the military, and it is teeming with life.

Well, dearest mother, I must stop for a while now. My dearest love to you and father always.

From your son

EDWIN

"Beyond the path of the outmost sun, through utter darkness hurled —
Farther than ever comet flared or vagrant stardust swirled —
Live such as fought, and sailed, and ruled, and loved, and made our world.

. . . . . .

"And ofttimes cometh our wise Lord God, master of every trade,
And tells them tales of His daily toil, of Edens newly made,
And they rise to their feet as He passes by, gentlemen unafraid."

(*Found in soldier's kit, forwarded to his mother from Ottawa*)

France, April 6, 1917
Good Friday

DEAREST MOTHER AND FATHER :

We are going up to an attack in a short time, and I am going to leave this note to be sent to you in case by God's will this is to be my final work. I have made my Communion, and go with a light heart and a determination to do all that I possibly can to help in this fight against evil, for God and humanity. I do not think of death or expect it, but I am not afraid of it, and will give my life gladly if it is asked. It is my greatest comfort that I know you too will gladly give all that is asked, and live on happily doing all that can be done, grateful to God for his acceptance of our sacrifice. To-day the news came to us here that the United States had joined the Allies, so I go with the happy consciousness that I am, and you are, fighting for our dear flag, as thousands of Americans have before us in the cause of Liberty. It may be comfort for you to know that I have a great company of comrades, men and officers, all filled with determination and cheerful courage.

My dearest love to S. and H. and their dear children. My heart is full of gratitude for having

such love as they have given me. My dearest love to all my friends, all who have loved me and whom I love.

Now, dearest mother, and dearest father, I will say good-bye for a time. You have given me my faith, which makes this so easy for me, and a wonderful example and inspiration of courage and unselfishness. All my love, and God bless you both. Your son.

IV

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

IV

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

In the Field, April 22, 1917

W. B. Abbey, Esq.,
523 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Abbey:

I would like to write you concerning the death of your son in action on the morning of April 10th, about nine o'clock. It is my duty to write, since I was in charge of the line at the time, but I want to write even more because I thought very highly of him as a gentleman and a friend. At the time of his death, he was in charge of one of our most dangerous posts. It was a strong point in front of our trench, and a little distance over the crest of Vimy Ridge. It was necessary to hold it in order to deny to the enemy the approach up the hill to the crest. Because of the loss we had suffered in the post, it was almost decided to withdraw from the post during the day, but your son came and argued that he should continue to hold the post because of its importance. In this he showed his fine devotion to duty and disregard of danger. On his way out to the post he was shot and killed by an enemy sniper.

His grave is marked by the Graves Registration Committee, and later a suitable mark will be set up by the battalion. The chaplain later read the service over his grave.

I would like to assure you of my genuine sympathy in your great loss. I feel a sense of personal loss myself, for one does n't often meet such fine fellows. In my brief experience with him, he had always shown himself a gallant soldier and a thorough gentleman.

Yours sincerely
A. P. Menzies
Major 4th C.M.R.

(*Extract from a letter to the soldier's mother, from Major Hertzberg*)

July 18, 1917

On the 9th of April in the morning, immediately after the final objective had been taken, Edwin took forward a party of men to reinforce the garrisons of some advanced posts. He reached these posts and successfully made the relief under heavy rifle fire from very close range. In one of the posts he found the officer in charge, Lieutenant W. J. Butson, senior subaltern of Edwin's company, seriously wounded, and realized that there was no chance of his pulling through unless he

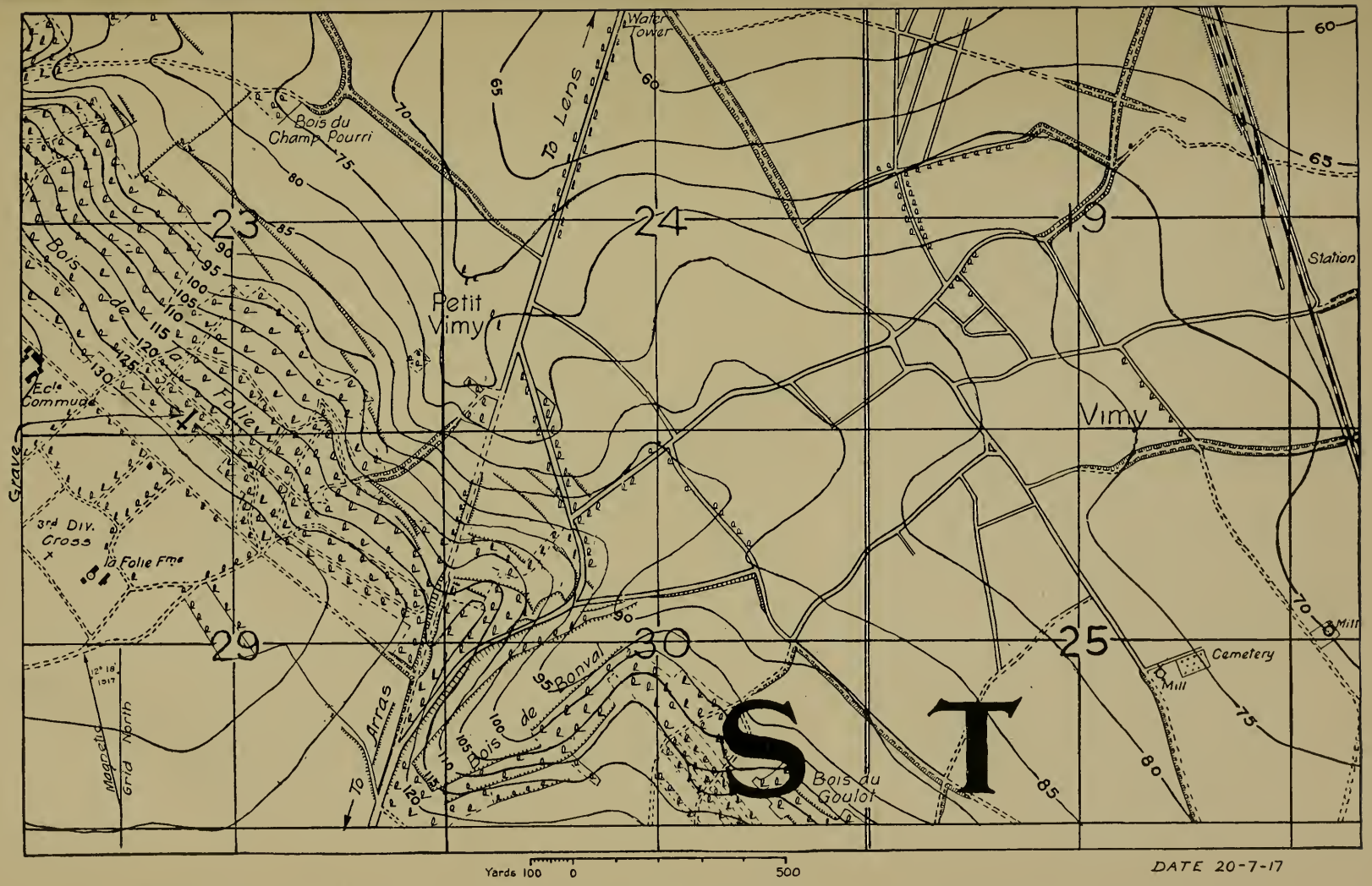
had medical attention at once. Edwin therefore took some of his men and decided to make an attempt to get Butson out. By every law in the world the thing was impossible, and yet impossible things are done by some men, even as this one was carried through by your son, over absolutely open ground in broad daylight, in full view of the enemy at very close range. The ground the party had to cover was only some three hundred yards, but up a very steep and exposed slope. It took four hours to cover that ground, jumping from shell hole to shell hole with the wounded man. At the expiration of that time Edwin and one other man in that party, the others all casualties, carried Butson into our front line, all in a state of complete exhaustion.

Edwin was then ordered by his O.C. to get some rest and not go forward again. He apparently stayed in the front line for a few hours, and then in the early morning of the 10th, with four scouts, again started out for the advanced posts to see that his men were all right. It was still dark, and he seems to have mistaken his bearing. It was all new ground and extremely difficult to locate, so he halted his four men and went forward himself to find the post, and just as dawn was breaking, he must have come right on top of the German line of snipers. It is reported that he rose up suddenly

from the ground and shouted to his men to get back to our people, with the information as to where he had found the German line, and then he pitched forward and dropped.

Patrols were immediately sent out to find him, and three of them at different times during the day are sure that they got to the spot where he was seen to fall. He was finally found some distance from that spot, after the enemy line had been forced farther back. They had obviously carried him back to their main line to some officer in order to identify what troops were against them. Everything was taken from his pockets and clothes, all his badges, etc., except his identity disc, which was round his neck. He was shot through the heart, and death must have been instantaneous. He was buried practically where he fell. These are cold, bare facts that I have given you. I have no words to enlarge on them or to praise him. You know how every one near him loved and respected him.

I am enclosing two notes I have from Captain M. (I met him twice — such a fine fellow) and also C., a very young sub, who told me he always looked up to Edwin and felt so safe and confident when he was with him. It went right through me, the way he spoke; and just before he left me, he pointed rather proudly to a very new and clean ribbon of the Military Cross on his left breast, and said so



MAP OF VIMY RIDGE ENCLOSED IN LETTER FROM MAJOR HERTZBERG. THE SOLDIER'S GRAVE MARKED BY CROSS AT LEFT

simply and quietly, "Abbey would have had that instead of me if he had not been killed." I have known men in South Africa, and in the early part of this war, to get a V.C. for less!

I was unable to arrange to have M. show me the grave, but he gave me map location and I managed to find it. He lies halfway up the steep slope towards the east, that he died in holding, with his face to his enemies and surrounded by his brother officers and men who fell with him. The whole slope is dotted with those "mounds of Flemish earth" that

> "witness bear as men pass by
> That greater things than life or death
> Are Truth and Right, which never die."

I think that so wonderfully suits Edwin. He saw some one fighting for Truth and Right and some one fighting against it, and at once, and for no other reason, he threw all he had with what he thought was right, and he died for it; and I think that must be the very biggest and highest thing that a man can do.

The slope is now all covered with fresh new green leaves and bright little flowers; all the stars and rents and shell holes are covered as though some one had healed the wounds. I picked the flowers from his grave the morning I put up the

cross, — such a glorious morning! The sun just coming up over the German lines that were all hidden by a kind mist, so that the guns were silent, only an occasional sharp crack of a rifle away off in the mist-covered trenches, and up on the ridge high above the ground mist, everything so bright and clear, and fresh and sweet-smelling; and we put up the cross and tidied things up a little, and then I sent my two men back, and I stayed a minute alone and thought of the wonder of it all, and then — I left him alone with his glory.

* * *

"So he passed over, and the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

THE END

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A